"SOPHIE'S CHOICE"

Screenplay

by

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From the book by William Styron

The screen is harshly lit, as white as a blank sheet of paper.

The only sound is a flute ... playing a childish exercise -- innocent and amateurish.

The image of a woman gradually appears -- not in the manner of a dissolve or fade -- but like the impression that is revealed when a photograph is developed.

She looks directly up at the audience; there is an expression of supplication, yearning, that might be erotic or religious. The image hovers half there, half not there, never fully developed.

NARRATOR (VO)
The landscape and the living figures of that summer as in some umber-smeared snapshot found in the brittle black pages of an old album have become more dirty and distant as time for me unspools with negligent haste into my own middle age; yet that summer's agony still cries out for explanation.

The sound of the flute fades away, its musical figure incomplete, unfinished.

The half-developed image of the woman fades to white, and is replaced by the image of a young man lying on a cot against a wall in a spartan, cell-like room, its shabby austerity relieved only by the pile of books on the floor by the bed.

The young man is thin and intense, a lonely figure trapped in the cell-like space, as if incarcerated. He is writing in a notebook. He stops at moments to listen to the cocktail party sounds that drift through the window and only serve to underline his loneliness.

It is twilight of a summer evening in New York, many years before.

NARRATOR (VO)
Call me Stingo, which was the nickname I was known by in those days, if I was called anything at all. At twenty-two, I felt myself to be hardly more than a skinny, six foot tall, one hundred and fifty pound exposed nerve with nothing very much to say. I wanted beyond hope or dreaming to be a writer, but my spirit had remained land-locked, unacquainted with love and a stranger to death.

The boy puts down his notebook and picks up a letter from which he obviously derives great pleasure.

FATHER (VO)
(as Stingo reads the letter)
My dearest son,
I admire your spunk tremendously, attempting to survive in that reptillian Sodom of the North. I myself have never spent more than seventy-two hours in that burg and that is about all most mortal men from civilized parts can stand.
I wish I could be of help to you financially and am amazed you are able to stow a little money away against that time when you sit down to write that novel. A friend of mine visited that place last month and said he had spent four dollars for dinner for two at Schraffts. Why for four dollars here at home you could feast all weekend ...

There is a burst of happy laughter outside the window. The young man puts down the letter and crosses to the window.

STINGO'S POV THROUGH WINDOW

The cocktail party in the garden of the little brownstone below wends its sedate, bourgeois way -- in total contrast to Stingo's ripe erotic fantasies in the following narration.

NARRATOR (VO)
From the single grime-encrusted window in my rear fourth floor cubicle I could stare down into the ravishing garden of a house on West Twelfth Street, and occasionally I glimpsed what I took to be the owners of the garden -- a youngish tweedy man whom I fantasized as a rising star at the New Yorker, and his lively and astonishingly well-proportioned blonde wife. There she was, the lovely, blonde Mavis Hunnicutt -- for the Winston Hunnicutts was the swank name with which I had christened them. There she was bending down to pluck a tulip from her flowerbed. In this adorable stance she could not know what she did to the loneliest junior editor in New York. My lust was incredible -- something prehensile, a groping snout of desire, slithering down the begrimed walls of the wretched old building, uncoiling itself across a fence, moving with haste serpentine and indecent to a point just short of her upturned rump, where in
(MORE)

NARRATOR (VO contd)
silent metamorphosis it blazingly flowered into the embodiment of myself, priapic, ravenous, yet under hair-trigger control. Gently my arms surrounded Mavis, and I cupped my hands under her full, free-floating, breasts.

CLOSE SHOT - STINGO - LOOKING OUT WINDOW

MAVIS (VO)
(whispered)
Is that you, Winston?

STINGO (VO)
No, it's I, let me take you doggie fashion.

MAVIS (VO)
Oh, darling, yes -- later.

STINGO'S POV - COCKTAIL PARTY - BROWNSTONE GARDEN

"Mavis" sedately chattering to her guests, happily unaware of Stingo's far-off fantasy.

From now on the action at the party matches the narration.

NARRATOR (VO)
Mavis's face wore a look of pleasure and animation as she gestured about, pointing to the ivy-covered walls of the garden, the bubbling fountain, the miraculous tulip bed set down in bright Flemish hues here amid the somber bowels. "If only ... " she seemed to say, her expression growing strained with annoyance. "If only ... " And then she whirled in a swift half-circle thrusting out in my direction a furious little fist. I felt illumined as if by a spotlight, and in my pounding chagrin I was certain that I could read her lips: "If only that god-damned eyesore weren't there, with all those creeps peering out at us!

CLOSE SHOT - STINGO AT WINDOW - AS STINGO PULLS HIS HEAD IN THE WINDOW AND SLAMS IT SHUT

INT: STINGO'S OFFICE - McGRAW-HILL PUBLISHING COMPANY

The wall is lined with book jackets with pretentious titles glorifying the corporate world.

Stingo is sweating over a typewriter. A middle-aged man enters

the room. He is a sleepy-eyed, intelligent, defeated but basically good-humored Irish man in his late fifties.

FARRELL
(chewing on his Yellow-Bole pipe)
They're pressing me for the jacket copy on the Kimberly-Clark book.

STINGO
Well, I've been having trouble with it.

FARRELL
(looking at the page Stingo has been typing)
This it?

He takes the piece of paper from the typewriter. He quickly glances at it, gives Stingo a quizzical look and then reads aloud from Stingo's typewritten sheet.

FARRELL (contd)
As the romance of paper is central to the story of the American dream, so is the name Kimberly-Clark central to the story of paper. Serving a host of human needs, many of its products -- the most famous of which is undoubtedly Kleenex -- have become so familiar that their very names have passed into the language. Kimberly-Clark statistics are staggering to contemplate: It is estimated that, during the winter months alone, if all the snot blown into Kleenex tissues in the United States and Canada were spread over the playing surface of the Yale Bowl, it would reach a depth of one and a half feet.
(chewing on his Yellow-Bole pipe)
I don't think this is quite what they had in mind.
(he grins understandingly)

STINGO
It's not like I'm not trying, Mr. Farrell. I was up til two this morning trying to write those blurbs. How do you do it, Mr. Farrell?

FARRELL
Do what?

STINGO
Maintain your equilibrium. Your sanity.

FARRELL
Well, when I look back at my distinguished career as an editor of Foam Rubber Monthly, World of Prosthetics, and Pesticide News, this seems if not a distinguished literary Oasis, at least a more gently civilized final resting place.

Farrell returns Stingo's paper. Stingo goes back to his typewriter.

NARRATOR (VO)
(as Stingo grinds out his copy)
The little salary I received was desperately important to me but I had begun to detest my charade of a job. I was not a Blurbist but a writer, a writer with the same ardor and the soaring wings of the Melville or the Flaubert or the Tolstoy or the Fitzgerald who had the power to rip my heart out and keep a part of it and who, each night I felt, separately and together, were summoning me to their incomparable vocation.

CUT TO:

EXT: ENTRANCE, McGRAW-HILL BUILDING - DAY

A series of men go through the revolving door -- all dressed similarly in conservative top coats and hats with a New York Times or Herald Tribune under their arms. Stingo walks in with an edition of a tabloid, the New York Post. His hair is disheveled, he is in an old Marine jacket, and is a striking contrast to the redundant Man In the Grey Flannel Suit image of the others.

INT: ELEVATOR

Stingo gets into the elevator with the others.

There is one man in the elevator who seems to be the object of particular politeness and courtesy by the others. He is obviously a man of power in the organization. His weasel-like face looks at Stingo disapprovingly. Stingo gets off the elevator, the disapproving executive looking after him.

INT: THE WEASEL'S OFFICE - A TOP EXECUTIVE OFFICE

Stingo stands in front of the weasel-like executive.

WEASEL
Sit down, young man.

Stingo sits.

WEASEL (contd)
I'm not sure quite how to put this but surely if you are bright enough to work as a junior editor at McGraw-Hill, then you're bright enough to realize you're not exactly conforming to certain aspects of the McGraw-Hill -- uh "profile."

STINGO
(very nervous)
I'm sorry. I know I've been a bit slow with my work.

WEASEL
(interrupting)
You don't wear a hat.

STINGO
A hat?

WEASEL
Every man at McGraw-Hill wears a hat.

STINGO
Every man?

WEASEL
Every man.

STINGO
(at a loss)
May I ask in what other way I haven't fitted the profile?

WEASEL
It is not wise for a McGraw-Hill employee to be seen with a copy of the New York Post.
(pause)
It just does not look seemly for McGraw-Hill editors to be reading radical publications at the office.

STINGO
Radical?

WEASEL
The Journal might be more appropriate. Sensationalism is preferable to radicalism.

CLOSE SHOT - STINGO DIGESTING THE ADVICE

INT: STINGO'S ROOM - MORNING

Stingo is dressed in a carefully pressed suit. He takes a new hat box down from the shelf in his closet, and opens it. He takes out and puts on a brand new, conservative Stetson hat. He gives one last look in the mirror, and taking his briefcase in hand, starts out the door, the perfect image of the conformist man.

He gets half way out the door, turns around, looks in the mirror one more time, takes off the hat and throws it across the room in self disgust.

INT: LOBBY, McGRAW-HILL BUILDING - MORNING

Stingo, standing in the lobby, attired in an old faded Marine "pisscutter" (the kind of cap John Wayne wore in THE SANDS OF IWO JIMA) and seersucker suit. Under his arm is the Communist Daily Worker.

He sees the Weasel come through the revolving door and follows him to the elevator. He doffs his cap a little ostentatiously but politely and as the elevator doors shut, casually opens his Daily Worker.

CUT TO:

INT: STINGO'S OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

He is packing his effects. The door opens and Farrell enters.

STINGO
I hope I haven't embarrassed you, Mr. Farrell.

FARRELL
(shaking his head)
A narrow escape. That's what you've just had. A narrow escape. People have been known to drown in this place. And they never even find their bodies.

Farrell extends toward Stingo a pint bottle of Old Overholt Rye, half full. Stingo nods his head, no thanks.

FARRELL (contd)
Well, you weren't cut out for this place anyway.

STINGO
I'm not so sure.

FARRELL
You want to be a writer. Like Flaubert and Tolstoy and Melville.

Stingo looks embarrassed.

FARRELL (contd)
Isn't that what you said when I interviewed you for this job?

STINGO
Like a million other English Majors who'll never write.

FARRELL
You told me you'd be saving money so you could write your novels.

STINGO
I haven't saved that much. Maybe I should have waited.

FARRELL
I thought you'd be like all the rest. You'd stay here thirty years and talk about the novel you'd never have the guts to try and write.

STINGO
I'll be honest, Mr. Farrell. It's scary, knowing I won't be getting that weekly check.

FARRELL
Ah, how I wanted to write. Poetry. Essays. A fine novel.
(pause)
I got side-tracked. The long years of editorial work of a rather technical nature.
(he regards the amber dregs in his glass)
Or maybe it was this. The sauce. This one-hundred proof goblet of dreams. Anyway, I did not become a writer.
(his voice trails off)
I got sidetracked.

Stingo has been listening carefully to Farrell. But he is forced to look away. He continues to stuff things in his briefcase.

FARRELL (contd)
If you want me to, I'll try to help you find another job.

STINGO
Thanks. But I'll just have to get used to being scared about money for a while.
(MORE)

STINGO (contd)
Otherwise I'll never know if I can write that novel. And when it comes down to it, that scares me more.

Farrell gazes down into his glass.

FARRELL
You remind me very much of my son, you know.

STINGO
I didn't know you had a son.

FARRELL
(his voice suddenly a cry)
Oh, I had a son! He was just your age, and he wanted to be a writer ... He was a prince with language, my son. At nineteen -- nineteen, mind you - he had a sketch published in the New Yorker. It was his eye, you see, his eye.
(Farrell jabs his forefinger at his eye)
He saw things that the rest of us don't see.
(he takes another swig from the bottle)
He was one of the last Marines to die in the war.

Farrell begins to weep quietly.

FARRELL (contd)
I don't know why it happened.

Stingo turns away embarrassed, too young to know how to deal with so much grief. Farrell rises, dabs his eyes and stands by the window, gazing out at the sun-encrimsoned Hudson.

He turns to Stingo.

FARRELL (contd)
Son, write your guts out.

He turns away and with a strange drunken dignity, weaves down the hallway out of Stingo's life.

CUT TO:

INT: LOBBY AND REVOLVING DOORS

Stingo leaving. Surrounded by conformist figures for the last time.

DISSOLVE TO:

MANHATTAN STREET - DAY

Stingo carrying his small bag of clothes and his big bag of books walks into a subway entrance.

NARRATOR (VO)
I had barely saved enough to last me through the Summer. Time enough to start my novel.

INT: SUBWAY

Stingo holding onto strap on moving subway.

NARRATOR (VO)
But I could no longer afford either the Manhattan prices or the rent; and so began my voyage of discovery in a place as strange as Brooklyn.

EXT: CHURCH AVENUE STATION OF THE BMT-BROOKLYN - DAY

Stingo rises out of the BMT exit onto the street, carrying his Marine Corps seabag and a suitcase.

EXT: BROOKLYN STREETS

Lined with old houses that have seen better days, but softened by gently greening sycamores.

EXT: MRS. YETTA ZIMMERMAN'S ROOMING HOUSE

A large rambling wood and stucco house of the nondescript variety erected shortly before or after World War I. It would fade into the homely homogeneity of other large non-descript dwellings that border on Prospect Park except for its overwhelming pinkness.

INT: ROOMING HOUSE - CLOSE SHOT - YETTA ZIMMERMAN

She looks right at us, as if we are Stingo. Yetta is squat and expansive, sixty or thereabouts, with a slightly Mongoloid cast to her cheerful features that gives her the look of a beaming Buddha.

YETTA
I know you're thinking about the pink, everybody does. But then, it gets you. Pretty soon, most people they don't want no other color. My late husband Sol, may he rest in peace, got this bargain -- unbelievable -- he got hundreds of gallons of Navy surplus paint, used for that -- you know --

STINGO
Camouflage?

YETTA
(nodding agreement)
I guess they didn't have much use for pink on those boats.

She shows him his ground-floor room. It is agreeably spacious, airy, sun-filled and clean as a Dutch parlor. It possesses a kitchenette and a small private bathroom with toilet, sink and tub, the only objects not bathed in pink.

YETTA (contd)
I call this place Yetta's Liberty Hall. Not that I don't gotta have rules.
(lifting a pudgy nub of a forefinger and ticking them off)
Rule number one: you gotta turn off all lights when you leave the room. Rule number two: positively no smoking in bed -- out. Rule number three: one week's payment due every Friday. End of rules! Everything else is Yetta's Liberty Hall. Like what I mean is, this place is for grownups.

INT: STATIONERY STORE

Stingo happily buying supplies. Pencils, cheap pens of various colors, a pencil sharpener, paper, lots of paper ... large yellow index pads, plain white sheets of paper, little stenographic tablets, ink erasers and plain erasers, index cards and cardboard files. He pulls out his wallet to pay, looks at his money, and carefully, with grave discipline, puts half the pads and paper back.

EXT: BROOKLYN STREET - DAY

Stingo passes by a market with a huge sign in the window: BIG CLOSE OUT SALE ON CANNED CORNED BEEF HASH. MARKED DOWN TO FIFTY PERCENT OF COST.

Stingo goes inside.

INT: MARKET CHECKOUT COUNTER

Stingo carries over an enormous case of Corned Beef Hash. The checkout girl gives him an odd look as she studies the size of his purchase.

Stingo tries to look at the hash with some enthusiasm.

NARRATOR (VO)
The more cheaply I could live, the more writing time I would have. For the present, I had to make a choice between nurturing my talent or my palate. I chose my talent.

Stingo exits barely balancing his stationery supplies and his enormous case of corned beef hash.

EXT: PINK PALACE - DAY

As Stingo climbs the steps with his heavy load.

INT: PINK PALACE - FRONT HALLWAY

As Stingo enters ... Out of breath, muscles wilting from the pressure of his load, Stingo barely manages to get to his door. He lets his heavy load sink out of his arms on to the floor.

There is a little book with a note attached leaning on the floor against his door. He reaches down and picks it up. It is a penguin book of Walt Whitman Poems. He opens the note.

INSERT NOTE in a man's bold, even rather florid handwriting.

NOTE
Yetta has heralded the arrival in 'The Ethnic Kingdom of the Pink Palace' of a young novelist from the South. Your neighbors upstairs invite you to dine with us in Sophie's room. Directly above yours. Tonight at eight. The book is a token of welcome, from one of Brooklyn's earliest Bards to Brooklyn's Newest.
Signed Sophie and Nathan

NARRATOR (VO)
I was touched by the thoughtfulness of my new and unknown neighbors. After my months of loneliness in Manhattan, it promised fellowship, familiarity, sweet times among newfound friends.

Stingo opens the door of his room, lifts up his various loads, rushes to the nearest table, and happily deposits them. He collapses into the nearest chair, and opens the book of Whitman poems. It is only then that he becomes aware of the sound of a commotion from above. Stingo looks up at the ceiling in alarm. The lamp fixture jerks and wobbles like a puppet on a string. Roseate dust sifts down from the plaster. The CAMERA HOLDS on Stingo's face as he becomes aware that the uproar from above is the sound, the frenzy

of two people fucking like crazed wild animals. Singo marches into the bathroom, opens an already neatly arranged, amply stocked medicine cabinet and reaches for a container of Alka Seltzer. He promptly puts the pill into a glass, fills it with water, and barely giving it time to fizz, swallows the entire potion.

He goes back to his room and begins to unload the bag of supplies, determined to ignore the human earthquake from above. There is the sound of giggles now from upstairs, the sharp smack of what sounds like a playful paw on a bare bottom. Although there has been no evidence that it is a particularly warm day, Stingo's forehead has broken out in beads of perspiration. However shakey, he manages to maintain his discipline. He screws his pencil sharpener to the wall. There is the sound of someone turning on a shower from above and, incongruously, the ravishing sweet heartbeat of the slow movement of Beethoven's Fourth Symphony from a phonograph. Stingo starts to relax.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT: STINGO'S ROOM - LATER

The room, now completely rearranged, Stingo cozily surrounded by his few worldly possessions sits on the one comfortable chair, writing on a large yellow legal pad, propped on his lap.

STINGO (VO)
(as he writes)
Charlie LaFarge was just sixteen. He gave women a great deal of thought, frequently to the exclusion of his ambitions, and sometimes his thoughts about women reached such a pitch that he knew his real and only desire was to lose his virginity.

His concentration is broken by the sound of shouting from above, the sounds of a spirited argument in progress upstairs. The speech is muffled and indistinct; there is the impression of shuffling, angry feet, chairs wrenched around impatiently, banged doors and voices rising in rage. The male voice is dominant. By contrast the voice of the female seems plaintive, defensive, generally submissive, with an undertone of pleading. There is the sound of a door opening above. Now, through Stingo's partially open door, we hear the voices more distinctly.

SOPHIE (OS)
(pleading)
You must know. I've never been unfaithful to you.

NATHAN (OS)
You're a miserable lying cunt. Spreading your legs for a cheap, chiseling, quack doctor.

SOPHIE (OS)
Nathan, listen ... please.

NATHAN (OS)
You fill me with infinite revulsion. Pure un-a-dul-ter-a-ted loathing.

SOPHIE (OS)
Nathan, don't go!

NATHAN (OS)
Let me out of here ...

SOPHIE (OS)
Please don't go.

NATHAN (OS)
Let me out of here before I murder you.

SOPHIE (OS)
We need each other. You know how much we need each other.

NATHAN (OS)
I need you like death. Go back to Cracow, baby.
(an odd, self-satisfied chuckle)
Back to Cracow!

Stingo opens his door, fully determined to leave this chaos.

EXT: HALLWAY - EVENING

As Stingo steps into the hall. He is frozen by the sight of Nathan. Nathan turns in his direction to find Stingo staring up at him, as if he has been watching him for some time.

NATHAN
(accusingly)
Just what the hell are you staring at?

STINGO
I'm sorry. You see I was just --

NATHAN
Did we give you a good show? Were you able to get off on your sneaky bit of eavesdropping?

STINGO
You don't understand. I was just movin' in.

NATHAN
(imitating Stingo's gently Southern accent)
Well, shut ma mouth, ah do believe the little eavesdropper's none other than our new literary Figure from the South.

Stingo is unable to move or speak.

NATHAN (contd)
Too bad I won't be around for a lively conversation. We'd have had great fun, shootin' the shit, you and I. We could have talked about sports. I mean Southern sports. Like lynchin niggers -- or Coons, Ah think y'all call them down there. So long, Cracker! See you in another life.

Nathan exits, slamming the front door. Stingo turns and watches, as Nathan runs away. He turns to go back into his room.

SOPHIE (OS)
I am so sorry.

Stingo looks up and for the first time sees Sophie, standing at the top of the stairs. For all the desperation on her face, she looks beautiful in the shadowed light.

SOPHIE
Forgive me.

STINGO
(moved by the dignity she manages to maintain in what is obviously a tragic moment in her life)
Don't apologize. Look, I'm right downstairs. If I can be of any help.

SOPHIE
You must understand. That's not the way he really is.

STINGO
Oh, sure.
(and understanding absolutely nothing)
I understand.

SOPHIE
Forgive us.

STINGO
As I said, if I can be of any help.

She stands there, not moving, as if she is listening for the sounds of Nathan coming back.

SOPHIE
Thank you ... You are kind.

STINGO
My name is Stingo.

She turns, crosses to her room and shuts the door.

INT: STINGO'S ROOM

Stingo returns to the room and sits down in his chair. He puts the pad back on his lap. There is the sound of unconsolable weeping from above. Stingo looks up at the ceiling, haunted by the memory of Sophie on the stairs, feeling himself pulled into the heartbreak of her life.

INT: STINGO'S ROOM - A FEW HOURS LATER

Stingo is at his desk, typing. Next to the typewriter is an open Johnson & Johnson Band Aid container. Beside the container is a collection of bills of various denominations.

INSERT PAPER STINGO IS TYPING

It is a budget. Based upon what looks like poverty line living, the numbers for such things as entertainment have been crossed out, retyped and cut and cut -- he has stretched his limit of writing time to twelve weeks.

There is a knock on his door. He quickly puts all his money into the Johnson & Johnson Band Aid container, closes it and takes it to the bathroom, carefully placing it in the back of one of the shelves in the medicine chest. He shuts the bathroom door. Only then does he open the door to his room.

INT: DOORWAY - STINGO'S ROOM

As Stingo opens it. Sophie stands at the door holding a tray of food.

SOPHIE
We had invited you to dinner.

STINGO
That's awfully thoughtful of you.
(he sees the tattoo on
her forearm)
Won't you come in?

SOPHIE
If you'll forgive me, perhaps some other time.

STINGO
Sure. I understand.
(he crosses over and puts the tray on his desk)
It looks wonderful.
(he spies the book of Whitman poems on the desk and takes it over to her)
I don't know what happened, but I'm sure he'd want this back.

SOPHIE
No. No. You must keep it. Nathan was so excited when he heard a young writer had moved in. He wanted once to be a writer, too ... you see?

STINGO
Well, whatever you say.

SOPHIE
If you'll forgive me. I'm very tired.

STINGO
Oh, sure. Say, I hope it won't bother you if I type at night. I mean I very often work at night. But if it's going to bother you ...

SOPHIE
Oh, no. I love the sound of typing. When I was a little girl, I used to fall asleep to the sound of my father's typing. It made me feel, how do you say? Secured?

STINGO
Was he a writer?

SOPHIE
No. My father was a professor of law. He had studied law in Germany. And he hated what the Nazis did to destroy the German Law and the German Culture. He would type night after night, articles, books, to warn the Polish People of the Nazi threat, to get help for the poor Jews they persecuted. Your typing will make me think of my father and his goodness. It will make me happy.
(MORE)

SOPHIE (contd)
(she turns to go ... and then facing him again)
Good night, Stingo. I am right? Yes? Stingo? I have never heard such a name.

STINGO
It's a nickname, I guess, that just stuck.

SOPHIE
I like it. It is a friendly, happy name.

She leaves. He watches her go up the stairs, transfixed by her haunting, tragic beauty.

DISSOLVE TO:

IT IS HOURS LATER

Stingo now in his pajamas, enters from the bathroom, climbs into bed, and turns out the light. He hears the sound of her weeping, after all this time, still undiminished.

DISSOLVE TO:

MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

Stingo wakes up. He sits up in bed. The sound of weeping has stopped.

NARRATOR (VO)
I awakened with a start just before dawn, in the dead silence of that hour, with pounding heart and an icy chill, haunted by a premonition that something terrible had happened to her.

Stingo gets out of bed, puts on his bathrobe and goes out into the hall. He climbs the stairs and walks over to her room. On the closed door he sees a little card with the name, SOPHIE ZAWISTOWSKA. He listens at the door.

NARRATOR (VO contd)
I was tempted to knock on the door, and then, if there was no response, to open it or call for help. But I realized how embarrassing that could prove to be.

Stingo turns, crosses to the stairs and is about to descend, when he sees that the door of the room opposite is partially open. A thin beam of light escapes from it into the hall. He walks over to it and reads the name NATHAN LANDAU. He peers into the opening.

NATHAN'S ROOM - STINGO'S POV

The room looks like the attic of a library. What WE CAN SEE of the walls are covered with books. There are books piled high on any available table, all over the floor, even on the little obviously unused bed. And on the floor, surrounded by books, is Sophie, curled up like a child in the fetal position, clutching a man's bathrobe in her hands.

There is the sound of a key in the front hall door and the sound of the old door creaking open.

INT: HALLWAY - CLOSE SHOT - STINGO

He turns toward the front door.

FRONT HALL & STAIRWAY - STINGO'S POV

It is Nathan, his figure SEEN IN SILHOUETTE, as he starts to mount the stairs. He seems dark, threatening, not unlike Heathcliff in WUTHERING HEIGHTS.

Stingo, embarrassed, hides himself in a corner where he can see but can't be seen. Nathan walks to Sophie's room. He opens the door. Stingo, remembering Nathan's threats and crazed behavior, is now more frightened than embarrassed. Finding no-one there, Nathan comes back into the hall and goes over to his room and disappears inside.

Stingo, not knowing whether he should make a move to protect Sophie from this threatening man, walks toward the room.

NATHAN'S ROOM - STINGO'S POV - THROUGH PARTIALLY OPEN DOOR

In the midst of the chaos of books, Nathan and Sophie are kneeling on the floor, Nathan's head buried in her bosom. Her face is flushed with joy.

NATHAN
(in a heartbroken whisper)
Don't you see, Sophie, we are dying. Dying.

Stingo turns his face away and goes downstairs.

INT: STINGO'S ROOM - MORNING

Stingo asleep. Knocking at the door.

NATHAN (VO)
Rise and shine. Rise and shine.
Hit the deck, kid. Up and at 'em, boy.
We're going to Coney Island!

Stingo looks toward the door. The door, while not locked, is

secured by a night chain, and Stingo can see Nathan's beaming face through the wide crack in the door. We hear Sophie's silvery giggle and now Nathan begins to rattle the door and the chain.

NATHAN
Come on, Cracker, hit the deck!

Nathan's voice takes on the syrupy synthetic tones of deepest Dixieland.

NATHAN (contd)
We gonna hab old Pompey hitch up the old coach an foah and hab us a little picnic outin' down by the seashoah!

Stingo leaps out of bed and hurls himself at the door. He tries to slam the door in Nathan's face, but Nathan has one foot firmly entrenched in the crack.

STINGO
Get your goddamned foot out of that door.

Stingo bursts into a fit of coughing.

NATHAN
You should cut out smoking, Cracker.

STINGO
Don't call me Cracker!

Stingo struggles vainly to dislodge his shoe from the crack.

NATHAN
(his manner suddenly apologetic, civilized, almost contrite)
I really didn't mean to offend you, old pal.

SOPHIE
Nathan didn't mean to offend you.

Sophie has moved from behind Nathan to a spot where Stingo can see her clearly. She is plainly flushed with high spirits and joy at Nathan's miraculous return.

SOPHIE (contd)
We just wanted to make friends and take you out on a beautiful summer day.

STINGO
(helpless in the face of her plea)
Well, okay.
(to Nathan)
You owe me an apology.

NATHAN
I said I wouldn't call you Cracker any more.

STINGO
Not just that. The bit about lynching and all that crap about the South.

NATHAN
Okay, I'm sorry for that too. Look, why don't you get dressed and come upstairs to Sophie's room. We'll go to Coney Island.

STINGO
I'll think about it.

NATHAN
Ah, be a sport.

STINGO
All right.
(a beat)
Thanks.

Stingo goes to the bathroom to shave. As he is about to turn the water on, he hears the joyous sound of Haydn's Water Music from above. He looks in the mirror at himself, bemused, fascinated by the change of sounds and mood from the evening before.

INT: HALLWAY - MEDIUM SHOT - MORRIS FINK - STINGO'S POV

As Stingo comes out of room, dressed. Again there is the sound of Nathan's laughter above.

MORRIS FINK
What do you think of that Nathan? Don't he break your balls?
(his voice becoming conspiratorial)
You know what I think he is? A golem, that's what. Some kind of a golem.

STINGO
A golem?

MORRIS FINK
A golem is a Jewish ... what do you call it? Some kind of monster. Like Frankenstein. Sometimes he acts normal, just like a normal human. But deep down he's a runaway fuckin' monster. That's a golem. And the poor girl ... you'd think she would have had enough tseuris in the concentration camp.

Morris exits. Stingo goes up the stairs with some hesitation. He knocks on the door of Sophie's room and enters as the last Haydn record finishes, and the great barge with its jubilant trumpets vanishes around a turning on the Thames.

INT: SOPHIE'S ROOM - DAY

Stingo looks around the room. Sophie miraculously, has achieved a triumph over the inexhaustible pink, splashing the room with complementary hues of orange and green and red ... Flowers are everywhere -- daffodils, tulips, gladioli. It is like walking into a Matisse painting.

Sophie and Nathan are nowhere in sight. Suddenly there is a giggle. A Japanese screen in one of the far corners gives a little vibration. From behind the screen, hand in hand, flashing uniform vaudevillian smiles, come Sophie and Nathan dancing a little two-step and wearing bewitchingly tailored clothes. More nearly costumes really, decidedly out of fashion -- his being a white chalk-stripe gray flannel double-breasted suit of the kind made modish more than fifteen years before by the Prince of Wales; hers a pleated plum-colored satin skirt of the same period, a white flannel yachting jacket and a burgundy beret tilted over her brow.

NATHAN
Our Sunday clothes. Today we're wearing early thirties. But we've got clothes from the twenties, World War I, Gay Nineties, even earlier than that.

He fetches a quart bottle of beer from the refrigerator and Sophie sets out cheese and crackers. Stingo slumps pleasurably in a chair.

He fills Stingo's glass with beer.

NATHAN (contd)
(looking at Sophie)
Isn't she something? Give me a kiss.

SOPHIE
One kiss, that's all.
(she smacks him lightly at the side of the mouth)
There! One kiss is all you deserve.

NATHAN
(humming)
I can't keep my hands off you -- u -- u.

Stingo, embarrased by this unprivate display of affection, takes a large swallow of beer and averts his eyes, only to

find himself looking upon the outsized bed with its coverlet of luscious apricot.

SOPHIE
(sensing his embarrassment)
Enough for you, Nathan Landau. No more kisses.

NATHAN
(in a kidding voice)
What do you think of that, Stingo? Here I am pushing thirty years old. I fall crazy in love with a Polish shiksa and she keeps her sweet treasure all locked up as tightly as little Shirley Marmelstein, I tried to make out with for five whole years.

Stingo tries to cover his surprise that Sophie is not Jewish. Sophie sets before them a plate containing squares of toast upon which she has melted little sunbursts of golden Cheddar-like cheese. She sits down on the rug beside Nathan's chair and contentedly leans against his leg.

NATHAN (contd)
When I first met this one here, she was a rag and a bone and a hank of hair. And that was a whole year and a half after the Russians liberated that camp she was in.

Idly, affectionately, he fingers the butter-yellow strands of hair that curl out from beneath the rim of her beret.

SOPHIE
I looked like the thing that chases birds away. The scarecrow? I had the scorbut ...

NATHAN
She means the scurvy. And typhus. And scarlet fever. And anemia. It's a miracle she emerged from that Concentration Camp alive.

SOPHIE
I thought I had leukemia and was dying. But it was Nathan who saw it was anemia.

STINGO
How could you tell?

NATHAN
I'm not a physician. Hardly. That's my brother's domain. But I did graduate in
(MORE)

NATHAN (contd)
science from Harvard, with a master's degree in cellular and developmental biology. I'm a researcher at Pfizer, here in Brooklyn. It's one of the largest pharmaceutical houses in the nation. I took her to a doctor, a friend of my brother's who teaches at Columbia Presbyterian. We put the little sweetie here on massive doses of ferrous sulfate and she began to bloom like a rose.
(a beat ... he looks down at her)
A rose. A rose. A beautiful fucking rose.

He lightly runs his fingers over his lips and transfers his fingertips to her brow, anointing it with his kiss.

NATHAN (contd)
(in a whisper)
God, you're something.

SOPHIE
Thank you for making me to bloom like a rose.

NATHAN
Not to bloom, just bloom. You're so good, it's about time you were perfect.

SOPHIE
Such a language! Too many words. I mean just the words for velocite. I mean 'fast,' 'rapid,' quick. All the same thing!

STINGO
Swift.

NATHAN
Speedy.

STINGO
Hasty.

NATHAN
Fleet.

STINGO
Snappy.

SOPHIE
(laughing)
Stop it! Too much! Too many words, this
(MORE)

SOPHIE (contd)
English. In French, it is so simple, you just say 'vite'! In Polish too it is 'Szybko'. In Russian 'Bystro'. In German, 'Schnell'. Only in English is it all so complicée.

STINGO
How many languages do you know?

SOPHIE
Oh, my father was a linguist. He taught me German and French and Hungarian and Serbic and Russian and Slavic. So what language must I speak now? English!

STINGO
Your father sounds like a fascinating man.

SOPHIE
He was a civilized man. Civilized ... That is a good word, yes?

STINGO
Yes. It is a very good word.

SOPHIE
He was a civilized man living in an uncivilized time.

STINGO
He died?

SOPHIE
The civilized, they were the first to die.

STINGO
(changing the subject, afraid his questioning may have caused her pain)
You play the piano?

SOPHIE
Oh, I love to play the piano. But I no longer play any good. My mother, she was a wonderful pianist.

Nathan drags her over to the piano.

SOPHIE (contd)
Nathan surprised me with the piano for my birthday.

Sophie sits down and plays a romantic little piece by Schumann, with great lightness and grace.

SOPHIE (contd)
My mother used to play this piece. I would lay in bed at night and I would hear this music and the sound of my father's typewriter and I would think that no one had a more wonderful father and mother or a better life.

Nathan leans over her as she plays, puts his arms around her protectively and kisses her on the head.

NATHAN
(like a vow)
Now I will make your life even better.

EXT: CONEY ISLAND - STEEPLECHASE PARK - THE LOOP-THE-LOOP

Nathan and Sophie and Stingo clutching each other as they sail through space, Sophie shrieking with joy.

NARRATOR (VO)
The beginning of that Sunday afternoon remains one of the pleasantest blurs amid a lifetime of blurred recollections. The rides sent Sophie into what were clearly transports of something past simple joy.

EXT: CONEY ISLAND - STEEPLECHASE PARK - THE SNAPPER

A fearful contraption whose iron arm flings Sophie and Nathan and Stingo out into space in a gondola, where they spin around in erratic orbits, screaming. Sophie cries out in ecstasy, with marvelous shrieks, all flowing out of some primitive source of rapture quite beyond normal sensations of sweet peril.

At one point, Nathan stands up as though he were being flung out of the gondola into space. He shouts what could be an Indian war cry and shakes his fists at the gods above, as if he has finally succeeded in defying the fates. Sophie and Stingo hold onto him, Stingo absolutely terrified at his daring.

EXT: CONEY ISLAND - STEEPLECHASE PARK - THE PARACHUTE JUMP

Nathan is on line, waiting to buy tickets. Sophie and Stingo stand apart, licking Eskimo Pies.

SOPHIE
But you must come. This is the most fun of all.

STINGO
Not with my vertigo.

SOPHIE
What is this vertigo?

STINGO
Heights. They make me sick.

SOPHIE
But it is such fun, Stingo. It is like when I was a little girl, my father used to push me higher and higher on this swing we had. And I would pretend my father would one day push me so high that I would look down -- like God -- and see all over Cracow.

The ice cream from her Eskimo pie has melted over her hand.

SOPHIE (contd)
Look, how foolish of me. I let the ice cream melt all over my hands and the sleeve of my dress.

Stingo takes out a handkerchief and tenderly wipes off the ice cream that has trickled down her wrists. He sees tiny delicately pink, wormlike scars on her wrists.

NATHAN (VO)
Come on!

SOPHIE
(to Stingo)
Come with us. We will all fly together.

STINGO
Go. You and Nathan. I will watch you fly ...

She goes toward Nathan and with childlike anticipation, she and Nathan buckle themselves into the little seats.

STINGO'S POV

Sophie and Nathan.

NARRATOR (VO)
I watched Sophie and Nathan in their old fashioned clothes grow smaller and smaller as they were hoisted up the guide wires beneath the billowing canopies. I was haunted by her gentle memories of the distant past, and the bitter harsh reality of the worm like scars she would forever carry on her wrists.

STINGO'S POV

Sophie and Nathan suspended now at the top, arrested for a harrowing and breathless moment as in that endless ticktock of time before the condemned fall through the gallows trap, then plummet earthward with a whooshing of air. Sophie screams as they begin to fall.

NARRATOR (VO)
And suddenly I remembered Nathan's voice that night before.

As the CAMERA FOLLOWS the joyous figures plummeting to earth.

NARRATOR (VO)
Don't ... you ... see ... Sophie ... we ... are dying! Dying.

I shivered violently, as if someone had thrown open at my back in the dead of winter a portal on the Artic wastes. I was suddenly ill at ease enough to long desperately to escape, to return to Yetta's and pack my bags and flee. If in my anxiety, I had done so, this would be another story, or rather there would be no story at all to tell. But I did not, I stayed at Yetta Zimmerman's, thus making sure to help fulfill Sophie's prophecy about the three of us: that we would become the best of friends.

Sophie and Nathan are now right over Stingo, falling closer and closer, hugging each other in delight.

FADE OUT.

INT: ENGLISH CLASS - BROOKLYN COLLEGE - 1946

CLOSE UP of Sophie sitting -- ravaged, pale and much thinner than we have seen here ... A young man's voice is reading poetry.

MR. YOUNGSTEIN (VO)
Because I could not stop for Death,
He kindly stopped for me;
The carriage held but just ourselves
And Immortality.

NARRATOR (VO)
Nathan once referred to the way in which he and Sophie met as having been "cinematic."
(MORE)

NARRATOR (VO contd)
By this he meant they had met in the delightful and haphazard way of those romantic strangers of Hollywood day-dreams, those lovers-to-be, whose destinies became intertwined from the first twinkling of their chance encounter.

CAMERA DROPS BACK TO REVEAL a motley group of striving scholars, a polyglot group but mainly Yiddish-speaking refugees from all the destroyed corners of Europe. The tacher, an ardent, fat, patient and conscientious young graduate student, his eyes tucked behind prism-like glasses. Sophie is fransfixed by the poem.

MAN NEXT TO HER
(whispering)
It's not hard enough to understand the language, just every day type talk, HE has to read us Rhymes!

MR. YOUNGSTEIN
I am going to continue reading at each class from representative American verse so you will begin to feel what the beauty of the language can be when written by artists. At our next class, I will read a Robert Frost poem, MENDING FENCES.

WOMAN
(to man next to her)
Mending -- that's something you can understand.

MAN NEXT TO HER
Mending fences?

SOPHIE
(still transfixed by the poem he read)
Who wrote that poem? Who did he say?

WOMAN
Frost ... he said.

MAN NEXT TO HER
Like in cold.
(shaking his head)
Such a language!

SOPHIE
No. The one he just read.

WOMAN
Oh. Dickens. Emile Dickens.

SOPHIE
Thank you.

MR. YOUNGSTEIN
I look forward to seeing you all next week. Now remember ... You must not get discouraged. You'll see. One morning you'll wake up and find you've been dreaming in English.

MAN
For that I'm studying? To dream in English! All I want is that I should be able to make a living in this meshugenah language.

The class rises and begins to leave. As Sophie rises, she puts her hand to her head, as if she is dizzy. She walks slowly toward the front of the class to the door.

MR. YOUNGSTEIN
Are you alright, Miss Zawistowska?

SOPHIE
I'm fine. Just a little tired.

MR. YOUNGSTEIN
I've noticed that you have been looking -- well, a little delicate lately. I hope I'm not being to personal.

SOPHIE
No. No. I thank you for your concern.

She seems anxious to leave the room. She walks like a woman frightened of her health, and attempting to look well for fear she may see the depths of her illness in the eys of others.

INT: BROOKLYN COLLEGE LIBRARY - DAY

CLOSE SHOT ... Sholom Weiss, the librarian, a pallid, dour, thirtyish man with aggressive horn rims and a green eyeshade; he appears to Sophie a startling double of every heavy, unbending mirthless German bureaucrat and demimonster she had known in years past. He is obviously waiting impatiently for Sophie to make her request.

CUT TO:

Sophie, feeling suffocatingly weak and ill.

SOPHIE
(diffidently)
Excuse me, sir, where would the catalogue file be in which I might find listed the works of the nineteenth century American poet Emile Dickens?

WEISS
(unsmiling)
In the catalogue room first door to the left. But you won't find any such listing.

SOPHIE
Won't find any such listing? Could you tell me why?

WEISS
(sharp and hostile)
Charles Dickens is an English writer. There is no American poet by the name of Dickens.

Sophie is again swept by a sudden nausèa.

SOPHIE
I'm sure there is an American poet Dickens.

WEISS
(with all the churlish indignation of petty power)
Listen, I told you. There is no such person! You want me to draw you a picture! I am telling you, do you hear me!

Sholom Weiss is SHOT from SOPHIE'S POV. The whole scene -- from Weiss's first hostility -- is shot as if it were a *confrontation with a Gestapo official*, as it has become in Sophie's mind. The CAMERA CUTS BACK AND FORTH in a hard stacccato Prussian rhythm culminating in Sophie fainting.

FADE IN:

Sophie seems to be reclining awkwardly on a sort of couch or window seat not far from the desk in front of which she had collapsed. She moves her head listlessly, conscious of something else, a voice, a man's voice, orotund, powerful, raging at the half cowering and perspiring figure whose back is to her but whom she dimly recognizes by the green eyeshade gone askew on his brow as Sholom Weiss.

MAN (VO)
I don't know who you are, Weiss, but you've got bad manners. I was standing right here! And I heard every intolerably rude and ugly thing you said to that girl. Couldn't you tell she was a foreigner, you fucking little momzer.

A small crowd has gathered round and Sophie sees the librarian waver as if he is being buffeted by savage winds.

MAN (VO contd)
That girl, that nice and lovely girl there with a little trouble with the language, asks you a perfectly decent question and you treat her like some piece of shit walked in. I ought to break your fucking skull.

The man yanks Weiss's eyeshade down around his windpipe. He turns toward Sophie and comes into her line of vision, and we see his face in the scene for the first time as he looks down at her. It is Nathan ... SHOT FROM SOPHIE'S POV. His strong and marvelously expressive fingers apply a cold compress to her brow. The first thing she sees of Nathan clearly are his hands, gentle and soothing and protective and life giving as they apply the compress to her brow. And then she sees his face.

NATHAN
(infusing her with a sense of repose)
You're all right, honey, you're going to be all right. Just don't worry about anything. Ahh, you're so beautiful, how did you get to be so beautiful? Just lie still, let the doctor take care of everything.

SOPHIE
(a whisper)
I think I'm going to die.

NATHAN
(his voice filled with infinite and patient strength, as the fingers bring exquisite coolness to her brow)
Your pulse is fine, steady. There, try this little sip of water.

He gently cradles her head as she sips water.

NATHAN (contd)
You're not going to die, you'll live to be a hundred.

EXT: THE PINK PALACE - DAY

A taxi drives up. Nathan steps out of the cab and helps Sophie out. She takes a few tentative, shakey steps and then he lifts her in his arms and carries her up the steps and into the Pink Palace, like a bridegroom carrying his bride.

INT: SOPHIE'S ROOM - DAY

Nathan enters, carrying Sophie. He places her on the bed.

NATHAN
You can't run around Brooklyn fainting in libraries and scaring people half to death.

He gently unbuttons and removes her soiled dress and then with delicate but firm pressure pushes her slowly down to the bed, where she lays stretched out, clad only in a slip.

SOPHIE
(in a faint voice)
Why am I so tired? What's wrong with me?

She realizes his eyes have fixed upon the number graven on her arm. Abruptly she makes a move with her hand, as if to cover it up, but before she can do so he has gently grasped her wrist and has begun to monitor her pulse as he had done at the library.

NATHAN
The doctor thinks you need a big pill to try to bring some color to that beautiful white skin. I'm going to take you to see my brother. Okay? He's one of the best doctors going.

SOPHIE
But you ... I thought ...

NATHAN
You thought I was a doctor. No, I'm a biologist. How do you feel?

SOPHIE
Better, much better.

NATHAN
Baby, have you been eating properly recently?

SOPHIE
For the past six months I have eaten more healthily than at any time in my life.

NATHAN
You could have fallen behind with iron and never had a chance to catch up. Look, I've got to go. But can I come back tonight? Don't answer that! I'll be back tonight.

She lies back on the bed, and closes her eyes. Nathan exits.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT: SOPHIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Nathan is fixing dinner. There is a big bag of groceries in the little kitchenette. Sophie is asleep on the bed. Nathan prepares a meal with incredible quiet and stealth so as not to wake her up.

Sophie wakens and sees Nathan.

SOPHIE
How long have you been here?

NATHAN
Long enough to prepare dinner. You look much better now.

SOPHIE
Let me help.

NATHAN
You are not to move.

She looks up at the table by her bed, on which Nathan has placed lovely long-stemmed yellow roses.

SOPHIE
... What have you done? They're beautiful.

NATHAN
(sweat popping out on his brow as he bends over the sputtering hot plate)
We're having calf's liver, prepared Veneziano and leeks in a special vinaigrette sauce. Loaded with iron.
(MORE)

NATHAN (contd)
And leeks ... filled with iron! Also will improve the timbre of your voice. Do you know that the Emperor Nero had leeks served to him every day to deepen the sonority of his voice? So he could croon while he had Seneca drawn and quartered?

Sophie looks at the bottle of wine. He pours the wine for her and hands it to her.

NATHAN (contd)
(like a wine steward)
Will madam taste the wine?

SOPHIE
(looking at bottle)
Mon Dieu, a Chateau Margeaux 1937.

NATHAN
We thought since it was a special occasion we would uncork a special wine.

SOPHIE
(she sips)
You know, when you live a good life like a saint and die, that must be what they make you to drink in paradise.

NATHAN
(gently)
Not to drink, just make you drink. Forgive me, I'm a confirmed and frustrated school master.

Nathan holds up his glass of wine toward her.

NATHAN (contd)
We will drink together in paradise.

INT: SOPHIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

It is after dinner. Rain spilling against the window. Sophie is sitting up in bed in a robe. Nathan is finishing the dishes. He crosses and stops at the book shelf. His attention is caught by the handful of books on a shelf above Sophie's bed: Polish translations of Hemingway and Wolfe and Dreiser and Farrell. He rises for a moment, and examines the books curiously.

NATHAN
We like the same authors.

He picks up a copy of LOOK HOMEWARD, ANGEL.

NATHAN (contd)
My God, what does Wolfe sound like in Polish?

She takes it from him and reads the opening paragraph.

NATHAN (contd)
(translating after her)
A stone, a leaf, an unfound door. Of a stone, a leaf, a door, and of all the forgotten faces ...

Sophie reads from the book in Polish.

They alternate.

NATHAN
It's a first for me. A beautiful first. Hearing Wolfe read aloud in Polish.

SOPHIE
And it's a first for me. Hearing Wolfe read aloud. In English.

They laugh.

NATHAN
If that poor bastard Wolfe had heard you read him aloud in Polish, he would have written in Polish ... What do you do, Polish baby?

SOPHIE
I work for a doctor, part time. I am his receptionist.

NATHAN
A doctor? What kind of doctor?

SOPHIE
He's a ... oh, such a hard word ... a chiropractor.

NATHAN
A chiropractor! No wonder you've got troubles.

SOPHIE
I wished somehow to teach music, but this was impossible.

NATHAN
I'm so sorry for what I said.

A pause.

NATHAN (contd)
You were in a concentration camp.

SOPHIE
I can't talk about that.

NATHAN
I'm sorry. I have a knack for poking my big shnoz into places where it has no business. But I want so much to know you. To be close to you.

She looks at his utterly sincere, loving face.

SOPHIE
I was in Auschwitz, Auschwitz-Birkenau. For twenty months.

NATHAN
But you're not Jewish, are you?

SOPHIE
Those of us who were not Jews were called Aryans by the Germans. But they despized us as filthy Polacks.

NATHAN
What did you do for twenty months?

SOPHIE
We was forced to help in the extermination of the Jews.

NATHAN
Those bastards. Those filthy, murdering Nazi bastards.

SOPHIE
The Aryan prisoners, after their bodies and strength was gone and they was inutile, they too was made to die, by shooting or with the gas.

They are both silent as they listen to the gusting wind and the throbbing patter of the rain.

SOPHIE (contd)
Only I did not die.

She leans back against the pillows and closes her eyes.

NATHAN
I should go.

SOPHIE
Thank God my father did not live to see what we were forced to do. My father was so brave. He tried to warn everyone about the Nazis. He tried to save the Jews, to warn the world of the terrible things the Nazis were doing to the Jews long before the war. Oh, you would have so loved my father.

NATHAN
I am grateful that now I know his daughter.

He walks over to a table near the door, picks up a copy of a book lying on the table, crosses back to the bed and hands it to her.

SOPHIE
(reading from the jacket)
Emily Dickenson.
(understanding her mistake)
A woman!

She opens the book. Inside is Nathan's name, written in a boyish handwriting, with the date, 1932, fifteen years before.

SOPHIE
This is <u>your</u> copy.

NATHAN
It's yours now.

SOPHIE
Thank you.
(slightly embarrassed)
Would ... would you stay a little while more.

NATHAN
(understanding)
I will stay with you until you fall asleep.

He plumps her pillow, freshens the bed and tucks the covers around her, not unlike a father putting his beloved daughter to bed. Sophie looks at Nathan, bewildered at what she feels. She closes her eyes and then opens them again, sensing the unremembered feelings of being safe.

He reaches over and takes the book from her hand.

NATHAN (contd)
(reading almost in a whisper)
"Ample make this bed,
Make this bed with awe;
In it wait till judgment break
Excellent and fair.
Be its mattress straight,
Be its pollow round;
Let no sunrise yellow noise
Interrupt this ground."

He reaches a hand over to Sophie's face and with a movement as light and delicate as a moth's wing, touches his fingertips against her cheek in a moment's gentle tracery.

FADE TO WHITE.

NARRATOR (VO)
In the weeks that followed my meetings with Sophie and Nathan, I had dinner with them almost every night. And every night my passion for her grew. But this passion that seemed to rise from the most lyrical wellsprings of my spirit as well as from the aching hunger of my lonely flesh, was momentarily displaced by a far more primitive, carnal pursuit.

The image of a young girl appears; the lush ripe figure of a pretty young Jewish girl in a lastex bathing suit kneeling on the beach half glancing at the audience, beckoning in an attempted sultry fashion. Lips pouting, striving to become a lustful mouth, deliberate echoes of the famous kneeling photograph of Rita Hayworth that appeared in LIFE. She is photographed as she exists in the Narrator's memory, in 40's Pin Up style. An image from an erotic calendar of the period come to life.

The girl is attempting to put sun tan lotion on her back. Not very successfully.

Her movements, if imitative, are deliberately enticing.

NARRATOR (VO)
Nathan, my new and dear beloved friend, introduced me to what seemed the answer to my relentless, all consuming horniness; a Sarah Lawrence English major, a "hot dish" Honors Student. Her name still curls across my tongue. Leslie Lapidus.

We begin to hear the voices of young people around her talking with great intensity as the sound is gradually brought up under the Narrator.

NARRATOR (VO contd)
Her name and her remembered image have become for me the embodiment of the farcical manner in which I transported my mismanaged and ungratified and engorged penis across the frozen sexual moonscape of the 1940's.

The CAMERA PULLS BACK, REVEALING Stingo in the middle of a group of middle class Brooklyn College students. In contrast to the tanned dark muscular bodies of the others, he appears slight and bony. Sharecropper-white with pink elbows and chafed knees. He is hypnotized by Leslie. Among the usual beach paraphernalia are several pairs of horn rimmed glasses and scattered books bearing such titles as THE FUNCTION OF THE ORGASM.

SANDRA
My analyst said that my transference problem has passed from the hostile to the affectionate stage.

LESLIE
(she turns toward Stingo)
Hey, oil me up, will you? I'm getting parboiled.

Stingo gets up, goes over to Leslie and kneels in back of her as he oils her naked back.

Stingo is thunderstruck by the language, the four-letter words, the liberation and the gloom.

SHIRLEY
(girl with great boobs)
My analyst said that the reason I find it hard to come is that I'm pregenitally fixated.

BERT
Nine months of analysis and I discover it's not my mother I want to fuck, it's my Aunt Sady.

Mild laughter.

LESLIE
Before I went into analysis, I was completely frigid, can you imagine? Now all I do is think about fucking. Wilhelm Reich turned me into a nympho, I mean sex on the brain.

She turns toward Stingo, not unaware of the lubricious effect of her words on him.

LESLIE (contd)
(to Stingo)
Want to go for a walk?

Stingo gets up, trying to control the burgeoning erection that rises with him.

LESLIE (contd)
So you're a writer ... writing always seemed like such an erotic act to me. Well, an act of repressed eroticism.

STINGO
Maybe that's why so many writers are so interested in sex.

LESLIE
You remind me of Thomas Wolfe, the misplaced Southern Wanderer, lost in the Land of the Jews. I did my thesis on Wolfe.

STINGO
(pleased)
That's what I was going to say. I felt like Wolfe.

LESLIE
Do you share his obsession for Jewish girls with melon-ripe breasts? God, after I first read Wolfe, I kept looking in the mirror to see if I really had melon-ripe breasts. But I was just thirteen. My titties weren't even cumquats.

STINGO
(husky voiced)
I think Wolfe would find they more than qualify now.

LESLIE
Do you think my boobs are too big?

STINGO
Oh, God, no. I think your ... boobs ... are just perfect. Melon ripe.

LESLIE
(pointing to each breast)
Which would you like? Cantaloupe? Or honey dew?

STINGO
(overcome)
Both, thank you.

LESLIE
Isn't it sad how Wolfe and Crane ... How many great writers died so young.

STINGO
Cervantes wrote Don Quixote when he was an old man.

LESLIE
He was Spanish. I don't think that counts.

STINGO
Maybe I should move to Spain. How would you like to live in Spain.

LESLIE
Is that an invitation or a proposition?

STINGO
You name it and it's yours.

He chuckles nervously, as if he has said something elegantly witty.

LESLIE
Walt Whitman came from Brooklyn and lived to be pretty old. Of course, he was homosexual. You're not homosexual, are you? Not that I would mind. I like homosexuals.

STINGO
(now perfectly relieved not to hide the erection in his swim trunks)
Oh, no, I'm not homosexual.

LESLIE
(looking at the bulge in his swim trunks)
You don't look homosexual.

STINGO
That's a relief. I mean not that I have anything against homosexuals.

LESLIE
You could be bisexual. I mean a lot of
(MORE)

LESLIE (contd)
writers have been bisexual. After all it's very important for a writer to try every experience there is. Don't you think so?

STINGO
Oh, I don't know about that, I mean, I'd like to write about women. So I think I'll concentrate my experience there.

LESLIE
Well, homosexuals like Proust and now Williams really do the best writing about women.

STINGO
What I mean is I'd like to write erotically about women.

LESLIE
You mean you'd like to write a pornographic book.

STINGO
Maybe you'd like to collaborate. We could do the research together.

He laughs even more nervously this time, as if he has just topped himself.

LESLIE
Now that was a proposition.

STINGO
I can think of other words for it.

LESLIE
My analyst said that mankind will forever be the enemy of itself until it learns that each human being needs, enfin, a fantastic fucking.

STINGO
He sounds very wise.

LESLIE
Of course, maybe writers should be sexually repressed. You know what Balzac said every time he had an orgasm?
(breezily)
"There goes another book!"

STINGO
(quickly)
Oh, I don't agree.

LESLIE
I mean look at so many of the great ones. Look at Melville for example.

STINGO
Melville? I don't quite see.

LESLIE
If Ahab had had some kind of sex life, he wouldn't have been so damned obsessed by that blubbery white whale. I mean the sexual symbolism in Moby Dick is classically, obviously Freudian.

STINGO
Moby Dick?

LESLIE
Of course. I mean all those men rowing around, trying to get their harpoons into that big white whale ...

STINGO
You make it sound like some sort of gang bang.

LESLIE
Well?

STINGO
I never quite looked at it that way before.

LESLIE
You have a wonderful Candide-like innocence about you.

STINGO
Oh, I don't know about that.

LESLIE
But I bet you could give a girl a fantastic fucking.

STINGO
Just name the time.

NARRATOR (VO)
(over Stingo's suspenseful chuckle)
The time was set: Thursday. We called it Making A Date.

INT: STINGO'S ROOM - MEDIUM SHOT - STINGO IN BED - MORNING

NARRATOR (VO)
I awoke that Thursday morning, a recumbent six foot long errogenous zone. I thought of the night that lay ahead and my heart gave a savage lunge which might be perilous to an older man.

INT: STINGO'S ROOM - THAT EVENING

MEDIUM SHOT Stingo as he finishes tying his tie and carefully puts on his jacket, stroking his hair down for the last time.

NARRATOR (VO)
Dressed in my solitary seersucker suit, my face nicked from the three times I had shaved that day, armed with a twenty dollar bill from my Johnson and Johnson treasury, I sallied forth from the room toward my greatest adventure.

EXT: BROOKLYN STREET - DAY

Stingo is at the door of a handsome Federalist house in Brooklyn Heights. It is a tall door with big, shiney, Eighteenth Century brass knocker. Stingo looks rather small standing on the stoop below. Not unlike David Copperfield or some other Dickensian child knocking at a strange new door, awaiting his strange new fate. The door opens.

LESLIE
If it isn't Old Stingo ... Right on time.

STINGO
(clearing his throat)
Hi!

INT: LESLIE'S HOUSE - ENTRANCE HALL

Stingo enters.

LESLIE
Do you want a drink?

STINGO
(reaching for something that sounds appropriately sophisticated and distinguished for this elegant house with its extraordinary paintings and great antiques)
I'll have a ... highball.

He follows Leslie into the library where she goes over to the wet bar to make drinks.

LESLIE
Just turn around and you'll see my favorite.

Stingo turns around and finds himself looking at a beautiful Pissarro. Leslie comes over to him with the drinks and they look up at the painting together.

STINGO
It's so beautiful.

LESLIE
Isn't it something?

HOLD ON a dignified, formal wide angle composition of the two aesthetes lost in the great painting. Stingo turns to Leslie, to share his aesthetic delight.

The CAMERA SLAMS in to a VERY TIGHT CLOSE UP, as he is forced back against the doorjamb by the sudden force of Leslie's tongue jammed down his throat. He leans back helpless, in a trance of tongue. With a gargling sound, she retracts her tongue, like a deflated bladder, and pulls her mouth away from him, then presses her face against his cheek.

STINGO
(breathing heavily, his speech slurred because of his numbed tongue)
God, Leslie ... Les ...

LESLIE
(in a barely audible whisper as she gazes at him)
Fucking, fantastic ... fucking.

The phone rings. She picks it up.

LESLIE (contd)
I'm fine, mother. I told you I'd be just fine. Yes, mother. Yes, I'll be sure the dog is fed ... and the plants are watered ... Mother, I am nineteen, almost twenty years old ... Have a good weekend, mother.
(she rolls her eyes)
Yes, Daddy, your little princess will be good.
(she hangs up)
God! You'd think I was still a child!
(MORE)

LESLIE (contd)
They go away for the weekend and the maid's out sick and they carry on about how will I survive for a weekend in this house, alone! And with this totally stocked fridge, a lock on every door, an alarm system, and God knows what else!

CUT TO:

Stingo as he realizes they're alone in the house and will be for the whole weekend.

NARRATOR (VO)
Thus, I realized that Leslie and I would be left to frolic in this place, alone. My cup ran over. Oh, my cup turned into a spillway flooding across the spotless carpet, out the door down Pierrepont Street, across all the twilit carnal reaches of Brooklyn. Leslie. A weekend alone with Leslie.

CUT TO:

INT: GAGE AND TOLNER'S RESTAURANT - A BOOTH - LESLIE AND STINGO FINISHING DINNER

Leslie, eyes ashine, reaches up and grasps his hand.

LESLIE
My analyst says ... oh, I know, it must sound ridiculous to you, with your background, hearing me quote my analyst so much, but if you only knew what he has done for me.

Stingo runs his fingertips very gently over the edges of her mouth, silvery-bright with vermilion lipstick.

LESLIE (contd)
I was such a little creep before I went into analysis, hypo-intellectual with no sense at all of the wisdom my body had to give me. Have you read D. H. Lawrence? Lady Chatterly's Lover?

Stingo nods no.

LESLIE (contd)
Lawrence has the answer ... oh, he knows so much about fucking. He says that when you fuck, you go to the dark gods.

Leslie squeezes his hand, which is now entwined with hers on his lap.

LESLIE (contd)
Oh, Stingo, I really mean it, to fuck is to go to the dark gods.

STINGO
(practically beyond control)
Then let's go to the dark gods.

CUT TO:

The Pissaro in all it's tranquil beauty. There is firelight and the sound of the air conditioning, blending with the soft sound of Tommy Dorsey on the Magnavox. The magic is only interrupted by the ponderous plop of the machine as it drops another record into place.

There are the groans and wet sounds of intense tonguing ... as the CAMERA POLITELY PANS around and REVEALS the silhouettes of Leslie and Stingo on the couch, framed with respectful formality. The CAMERA, IN STATELY FASHION, MOVES IN ON the frenzied couple, until it is aimed directly into the eye of the hurricane -- the two frantically exploring mouths. IT PANS DOWN Leslie's body to follow Stingo's attempt at a pincer movement at the twin peaks of her breasts, where Leslie holds his hand locked, hopelessly at bay, with a strength more worthy of some one who had spent those long hours in Analysis in Karate or some other of the Martial Arts.

The splendid, Eighteenth Century grandfather's clock strikes two historic chimes, indicating how long this erotic battle has been going on. The CAMERA HOLDS on Stingo's hands held at bay. Finally one hand of Stingo's manages to pull away and reach down OUT OF CAMERA. We hear the sound of unzipping, done as stealthily as is humanly possible, and then Stingo's hand rises back in the FRAME, takes one of Leslie's and pulls it back down OUT OF FRAME. Leslie sails off the sofa as if some one had lit a fire beneath her. She starts to cry.

STINGO
(his speech a bit disturbed by the soreness of his by now exhausted tongue)
I think I have the right to ask, WHAT THE FUCK IS GOING ON?

She cries more heavily.

LESLIE
You don't understand. I can't go all the way.

STINGO
You said, and I quote you exactly, "I'll
(MORE)

STINGO (contd)
bet you could give a girl a fantastic fucking."
(pause)
Well, I could. And I wanted to ... that's all.

LESLIE
(snuffle, snuffle)

He gives her a Kleenex.

LESLIE (contd)
But I didn't say I wanted you to do it. Also, I said 'a girl', I didn't say me.

A groan is released from Stingo that would stir the souls of the dead.

LESLIE (contd)
I'm a virgin.

STINGO
No offense, understand, but I think you're a very sick virgin. I like you a lot, Les. I just think it was unfair of you to string me along this way.

LESLIE
(in a desolate voice)
Oh, Stingo! It's just I've hit a plateau in my analysis. Before I reached this plateau of vocalization, I could never have said any of those words -- those Anglo-Saxon four-letter words that every one should be able to say. Now I'm completely able to vocalize.

STINGO
(his voice like the roar of a wild beast)
You mean you can <u>say</u> fuck but you still can't do it!

EXT: STREET IN FRONT OF LESLIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Stingo emerges from the door and his lonely figure, shoulders slouched, totally broken, slowly walks away from the CAMERA.

NARRATOR (VO)
I had come to a critical extremity in my life. This extremity took the form of the craggy rock of sex, upon which I had
(MORE)

NARRATOR (VO contd)
obviously though inexplicably foundered. I was left with a sense of aching emptiness and failure and I began to wonder if I was doomed to lead a life of sterile celibacy and isolation.

EXT: YETTA'S ROOMING HOUSE - NIGHT

A forlorn and bedraggled Stingo climbs the steps and disappears inside the door.

INT: ENTRANCE HALL

Stingo enters. The door to Sophie's room opens.

SOPHIE (VO)
(happy and relieved)
Nathan, my darling, I'm just so glad you're home.

She appears at the top of the staircase, dressed in Nathan's robe. She looks down and sees Stingo and her face falls in disappointment.

SOPHIE (contd)
(trying to hide her disappointment)
Stingo!

STINGO
Je' little ol' Stingo.

SOPHIE
Would you like to come up and have a drink? A nighthat, Nathan calls it.

STINGO
(smiles)
A nightcap.

SOPHIE
It is not the same?

STINGO
Not if you plan to swallow one.
(he walks up the stairs to her)
Is Nathan doing one of his all night numbers at the lab?

SOPHIE
I think he must be. You know, Nathan, when he's involved, he loses track of time.

They enter her room.

STINGO
Hey, you've changed all the furniture around.

SOPHIE
Sometimes when I can't sleep, I move furniture.

She pours him a drink.

STINGO
(easing himself into a chair)
God I love it here. I'm just so glad you couldn't sleep.

SOPHIE
You are talking funny ... No? You hurt your mouth?

STINGO
(embarrassed)
I ... I bit my tongue.

SOPHIE
Do you want me to get you some thing for it?

STINGO
Really, all it needs is to be left alone.
(changing the subject)
This is about the third or fourth time you've moved this room around ...

SOPHIE
It is good because while you do it you don't think about nothing else.

STINGO
(smiles)
I'd better try it.

SOPHIE
(taking up his palm and looking into it like a mock palmist)
You will not have to move furniture. You will move mountains.

STINGO
(smiles, wryly)
I ... I can't even move my tongue!

SOPHIE
(laughs)
Maybe you moved it too much!

STINGO
(passionately)
Oh, God, Sophie, why isn't the world made up of women like you?

SOPHIE
(touched. She takes up his palm again)
I see many many women in your life. Beautiful women who adore you, who make much love with you.

STINGO
They all look like you, I hope.

SOPHIE
Oh, much more beautiful. Much more good. Much more strong. One stands out. A wonderful, bright, sexy lady who becomes your wife. I see it now ... I see the two of you making love and sleeping happily together in the same bed for many many years.

STINGO
(a groan)
Oh, I wish I could believe you!

SOPHIE
But is it not obvious?

STINGO
Some times I think I'm going to be alone forever.

SOPHIE
I am not fair with you. Because you are American and you are young and talented, I think: Stingo, oh, he has no <u>real</u> problems!

STINGO
You don't know if I'm talented. You haven't read anything I've written. Hell, <u>I</u> don't know if I'm <u>really</u> talented!

SOPHIE
I never ask you about your book, what it is about, because I know writers often don't like to talk about their work.

STINGO
It's about a boy ... A twelve year old boy. It takes place in one year. The year his mother died.

SOPHIE
It is how you say? Autobiographical?

STINGO
Only to some extent.

SOPHIE
I didn't know your mother died.

STINGO
(half smiling)
When I was twelve.

SOPHIE
It must be terrible to have to deal with a parent's death when you're so young and you need them so much.

STINGO
I never really dealt with it. Maybe that's why I'm writing about it now.

SOPHIE
You loved your mother very much.

STINGO
Not enough.

SOPHIE
Not enough?

Stingo looks away and then he turns to her.

STINGO
The winter of the year she died was one of the coldest winters we ever had. I was supposed to come home first thing after school and put more wood on the fire for her. She couldn't do it herself. The cancer'd hit her bones. She'd just sit there all alone by the fire, reading these long novels. One afternoon at school a friend invited me to see his new car. I forgot all about going home. We saw his new car and played in the snow and went ice skating. It was one of the happiest afternoons of my life. When I got home that night, she was sitting
(MORE)

STINGO (contd)
there, helpless, half frozen from the cold. She had counted on me to help keep her alive. And I ... I just forgot about her. That was the only time my father ever beat me. I was glad he did. She died a few months later. And I thought, if I'd only remembered to go home that afternoon, and put wood on the fire, maybe she wouldn't have died.

SOPHIE
It is what is so terrible about outliving the people we love. The guilt.

STINGO
Your father?

SOPHIE
And my mother. And my husband.

STINGO
(surprised)
You were married.

SOPHIE
When I was very young. To an instructor at the University -- a disciple of my father's.

STINGO
(quietly)
They all died?

SOPHIE
My father and my husband were killed by the Nazis.

STINGO
Were they in the Polish army?

Sophie shakes her head.

STINGO (contd)
Was it because of your father's Anti-Nazi writing?

SOPHIE
I don't know why. It makes no sense. At first our lives was not changed very much by the German occupation. My father and my husband still taught at the University. I went to church many times
(MORE)

SOPHIE (contd)
to thank God for having spared my family. But one morning, when I prayed at Mass, I had a premonition. I run from the church to the university. There was a great crowd of people near the main gate in front of the courtyard and there were hundreds of German soldiers with rifles and machine guns. They wouldn't let me pass. And then I saw this older woman whose husband was teaching la chimie, you know, chemistry. She was hysterical and crying and she fell into my arms saying "Oh they are all gone, they have been taken away! All of them." I couldn't believe it. And then I saw these closed vans going down the street, and then I believed it.

Stingo holds her hand more tightly.

SOPHIE (contd)
They were taken to the Concentration Camp of Sachsenhausen and were shot to death.

STINGO
(his voice hardly above a whisper)
And your mother?

SOPHIE
We went to Warsaw, my mother and me. For two years we lived quiet, safe, until she start to die of le consumption. Tuberculosis.

STINGO
(barely even a whisper now)
And you? How ... ? Why ... ?

SOPHIE
Why did they take me to the concentration camp?

STINGO
(apologizing for his curiosity)
I'm sorry.

SOPHIE
It's alright.

(MORE)

SOPHIE (contd)
(pause)
I thought that meat might help make my mother stronger. So one day I went to the country and I bought a ham. I hid the meat under my skirt and pretended I was pregnant. On the train back to Warsaw the Germans stopped me. I was so frightened. They saw my fear, reached under my skirt and pulled out the ham.
(pause)
I was sent to Auschwitz.

STINGO
(incredulous)
You were sent to Auschwitz because of a ham?

SOPHIE
I was sent to Auschwitz because they saw I was afraid.

Stingo picks up her arms, and gently touches the scars on her wrists.

SOPHIE (contd)
You have already figured out what they mean.

STINGO
You tried to commit suicide.

Sophie nods.

STINGO
In Auschwitz.

SOPHIE
It was after. After I was released from Auschwitz. After we had been liberated.

STINGO
(confused)
After you were safe?

SOPHIE
It was in the refugee camp in Sweden. I knew that Christ had turned his face away from me. I knew that only a Jesus who has no pity and no longer cared for me could permit the people I loved to be killed and let me live with shame. I went to the church and I knelt and I took a piece of glass and cut my wrists.

She sees Stingo's bewilderment.

SOPHIE (contd)
There is so much you could not understand. So much I can not tell.

STINGO
Have you told Nathan?

She seems frightened by the thought. She looks at him, searching his eyes, as if wondering how much she can trust him.

Stingo bends down and kisses the scars on her wrists.

STINGO (contd)
Trust me, Sophie.

There is the sound of the front door opening.

SOPHIE
(her face suddenly alive with hope)
It must be Nathan.

She rushes out of the room.

The CAMERA STAYS with Stingo in Sophie's room.

SOPHIE (VO)
Ah, Aristide.

ARISTIDE WEISTEIN (VO)
(as she climbs the stairs)
I'm on Night Duty at Brooklyn Hospital this week. My patient's an old lady who's meaner than my mother. If you can believe. I think she stays alive by keeping angry. Sophie, don't you ever sleep?

Sophie returns to the room, the hope drained from her face.

SOPHIE
Would you like another drink?

STINGO
Sure.

SOPHIE
I think I have another too.

STINGO
The bottle's empty.

SOPHIE
There is some more in Nathan's room.

Sophie and Stingo walk across the hallway to Nathan's room.

STINGO
Maybe you'd feel better if you just called Nathan at the lab.

SOPHIE
He doesn't like for me to call him at work.
(pause. Embarrassed by her confession)
I tried. An hour ago. There was no answer.

STINGO
The switchboard's probably turned off.

INT: NATHAN'S ROOM

They turn on the light. The room is still covered with books of every description. Magazine articles of interest that have been torn out and are scattered around. Periodicals of all kinds: The Bulletin of The Atomic Scientists, Biology and Chemistry Journals, Little Literary Magazines, magazines and books reflecting the extraordinary range of Nathan's mind and curiosity.

Somehow, being in his room, surrounded by all his books and papers, seems to make Sophie more afraid.

SOPHIE
Sometimes when Nathan can't sleep at night he gets up and walks around the city. He goes into all kinds of neighborhoods. Once he came back and his eye was black, his jaw was swollen. I was afraid it might be broken.
(abruptly)
Oh, Stingo, I don't know where Nathan is. He could be hurt. I think we should call the police.

STINGO
Why don't we just wait another couple of hours until there's someone on the switch-board at the Laboratory. He probably just worked late, got tired and fell asleep.

SOPHIE
Of course. I'm sure you're right.

Stingo takes their glasses, puts them on Nathan's desk, pours their drinks.

He looks at the papers and books and periodicals piled on the desk. They make a very large pile, with paper clips and pieces of paper put into books and magazines, obviously very carefully examined, and all about the Holocaust: Transcripts of the Nuremberg Trials, articles concerning the Concentration Camps and the Nazis and Jews, all underlined. Stingo hands Sophie her drink, and picks up an article on top. It is about the escape of many of the top Nazis and is illustrated with two big pictures of Eichmann and Mengele.

STINGO
He must have everything that anyone has written on the Nazis and the Jews.

SOPHIE
He is obsessed by all the Nazis who are escaping justice and the terrible things they did to the Jews. One night I woke up and he was not in bed. I found him here, reading about the Nazis. He said he was going to go out and find every last one of them that had escaped.

STINGO
Did Nathan's obsession with the Nazis start after he met you?

SOPHIE
I was wrong to tell him anything of my experience. It has done such terrible things to him.

STINGO
I can understand the way he feels. After all, he is a Jew.

SOPHIE
Don't you think I am angry that these Nazis, these terrible men live and my father, such a good man, who tried to save the Jews, is killed? Don't you think I am angry, too?
(she shakes her head)
But you do not understand Nathan. You do not know what he might do. Sometimes I think ...

NATHAN (VO)
What do you think, my little Polish baby?

They turn around to see Nathan standing in the door. There is a strange, burning look in his eyes, as if he is trying to look right through them. Stingo is frightened. It is as if he and Sophie have been caught in Nathan's room doing or saying something disloyal. Sophie goes to him and throws her arms around him.

SOPHIE
Nathan. You're alright.

NATHAN
(an insidious, taunting tone)
Oh, I'm alright. But what about the two of you?

SOPHIE
I am so foolish. But I was frightened. I was afraid something had happened to you.

NATHAN
I would have called but I didn't want to take the chance of waking you. We're on to something in the work. Something big. Something very big.
(he studies Stingo)
But you were here. With Sophie.

SOPHIE
Stingo came home from his date and I heard him and I thought it was you and I asked him up. He has been such a good friend. He keep me company because he knew I was so frightened.

NATHAN
So now you have seen my sanctum sanctorum. Now you know all of Nathan's dark and dour secrets.

STINGO
Hardly.

Nathan crosses to his desk. He stares at the pictures of Eichmann and Mengele.

NATHAN
They wipe out six million Jews and the world lets them escape! Want to join me in a little lynching party, Southern boy? I expect you might have a lot to teach me there.

STINGO
If you'll just excuse me, I think I'm going to call it a night.

Sophie holds Nathan and speaks directly to him. As if, with all her love and reason, she is willing him out of the strange dark mood he's in.

SOPHIE
Stingo is our friend. Our best friend. He deserves only our thanks. I was so frightened. I don't know what I would have done without him.

Nathan seems to waver for a moment, and then his face relaxes. The burning intensity seems to fade. It is as if we have witnessed some medieval passion play in which the Forces of Light and Love triumph over the forces of Dark and Evil.

NATHAN
(taking Stingo's hand)
I'm sorry, Old Buddy, forgive me. Of course, my beloved Sophie's right. Sometimes I get crazed with work. After all, let's not forget, I'm just another Mad Scientist. We're all a bunch of nuts. Thanks, my friend. Thanks for taking care of Sophie.

STINGO
(relieved)
Hell, it's okay. I'm just glad we're all back together.
(crossing to the door)
Good morning, my friends.

He turns around to find Sophie and Nathan in a passionate embrace. Stingo is stunned by the abruptness and intensity of their passion.

INT: *HALLWAY AS STINGO WALKS OUT THE DOOR*

NARRATOR (VO)
I could not bear the thought of going to my bed alone.

EXT: BROOKLYN - EARLY MORNING

A SERIES OF SHOTS of Stingo walking Brooklyn Streets.

NARRATOR (VO)
I now felt closer to Sophie than to any other person in my life. And yet I understood her less. How could I under-
(MORE)

NARRATOR (VO contd)
stand her choosing death at the moment she should have felt reborn? And so I wandered through the alien streets of Brooklyn till morning came, and tried to understand, -- as I still try to understand -- , these two drowning people who only in each other could find the saving breath of life.

EXT: BROOKLYN - DAY

An exhausted Stingo returning to the Pink Palace.

CLOSE UP - STINGO

As he looks at the park across the street.

STINGO'S POV - PARK ACROSS THE STREET.

Nathan is playing football with a group of delighted boys. He kicks a ball for them and they go sailing across the park to catch it. One boy throws a pass to him, totally out of control. But Nathan leaps up, in a glorious display of acrobatic grace, and plucks the ball from its confused trajectory. He starts to run with it, but lets his would-be tacklers swarm over him and pull him down, to their delight: A Gulliver held willing captive by the Lilliputians. His joy seems boundless.

NARRATOR (VO)
The man I looked at could not have slept. And yet he was aglow with energy and life. It was as if, -- unlike other mortal men -- he had no need of sleep or restoration.

INT: STINGO'S ROOM - EARLY EVENING (LATE AFTERNOON)

CLOSE SHOT - INDEX PAD

A piece of lined yellow paper on Stingo's lap fills the screen. As he writes on it, CAMERA PANS UP to Stingo's face. There is an unlit cigarette between his lips.

Suddenly a silver lighter appears in front of Stingo's face and ignites the end of the Camel between his lips. Stingo jumps up in fright, dropping the burning cigarette on his trousers which is quickly retrieved by a hand. The CAMERA PANS UP TO REVEAL Nathan, smiling, seemingly pleased at the stealthy way in which he scared Stingo.

NATHAN
(playfully)
May I be forgiven for abetting your filthy habit. I carry this to light Bunsen Burners.

STINGO
You always scare the shit out of me.

A phrase of music, celestial and tender, flows down very softly from the room above. (Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring.)

NATHAN
I was hoping Sophie was taking a nap. She just doesn't sleep much. Ever since the war. Hey, how about letting me see some of those precious pages of yours.

Stingo looks dismayed, as if he had threatened to kill a member of his family.

NATHAN (contd)
Why not? I won't interfere, I won't comment, I won't even make any suggestions.

STINGO
Nobody's seen it, Nathan.

NATHAN
I ain't nobody, kid. I'm a friend. Haven't you heard of those things down South? Friend: A person attached to another by feelings of affection or personal regard. A person who gives assistance; a patron or supporter; i.e. a list of friends of the Boston Symphony. One who is on good terms with another; one not hostile. A member of the same nation, party, etc. Make Friends with: to enter into friendly relations with; become a friend to. Understand? Friend!

STINGO
(still fearful)
Well, you see, don't laugh, I vowed when I started writing, that I wouldn't let anyone look at the book until its final sentence, and then only Alfred A. Knopf in person.

NATHAN
You mean you're just terrified somebody won't like it.
(pause)
Terrified as in filled with terror; made greatly afraid. Terror, an intense, sharp, overmastering fear. i.e. To be frantic with terror. A feeling, instance or cause of intense fear.

STINGO
Okay. Okay. Okay.

He hands him about ninety pages. Nathan grabs them and goes to the door.

NATHAN
After all, what's the worst that can happen? I may discover you can't write!

STINGO
(leaping from his chair)
You son of a bitch! Give them back.

NATHAN
(grinning as he quickly slips *out of the door*)
Bye now!

INT: HALLWAY

Nathan taking the steps three at a time, Stingo running after him. Nathan goes into his room and slams the door.

NATHAN
(chuckling from behind closed door)
Too late now, Buddy. Your precious pages are beyond your reach.

Stingo starts back down the stairs and stops as the door opens in back of him.

SOPHIE
(cheerfully catching up with him)
Nathan has ordered me to take you to the movies. He make me your guardian while he reads so you don't do no violence to yourself.

She takes him warmly by the arm and out the door.

INT: MOVIE THEATRE

Danny Kaye film is on the screen. Danny Kaye is going through one of his routines.

CUT TO:

Sophie and Stingo: Sophie is laughing like a child. Stingo is as entranced by her delight as by the film.

DISSOLVE TO:

The End flashes on the screen and the Fox Movietone News comes on.

SOPHIE
We must stay and see the beginning. I so love that Danny Kaye.

NEWSREEL (VO)
MORE NAZI WAR CRIMINALS FINALLY PUNISHED. IN AUSCHWITZ, AT THE SCENE OF HIS CRIMES REICHFUHRER RUDOLPH HESS, THE COMMANDANT OF AUSCHWITZ, AND FIVE OF HIS COMPATRIOTS ARE HUNG.

CUT TO:

SCREEN

S.S. Reichfuhrer Rudolph Hess is about to be hanged. His face is set in an expressionless mask, manacled, gaunt and unshaven, standing in disheveled prison fatiques, the ex-Commandant's neck entwined with a rope, descending from a stark metal gallows tree around which a clutch of Polish soldiers are making last preparations. In back of the shabby figure, with its already dead and vacant face, there is the blurred, squat, begrimed shape of the original crematorium at Auschwitz.

NEWSREEL NARRATOR (VO)
The vile crimes of S.S. Reichfuhrer Rudolph Hess are documented on film captured from the Nazi film archives. It was Hess who, having observed the effectiveness of a crystalized hydrocyanic compound called Zyklon B when used as a vapor on the rats that infested Auschwitz, suggested this means of liquidation to his immediate superior, Adolph Eichmann.

Shot of interiors of gas chambers at Auschwitz and of mass graves of bodies that were gassed.

NEWSREEL NARRATOR (VO contd)
Turning nine-hundred Russian prisoners of war into guinea pigs, Hess found the gas splendidly suited to the quick dispatch of human beings and it was employed thereafter extensively on countless prisoners. Hess was also an innovator in the use of such techniques as miniature minefields to blow up wayward or escaping prisoners, high voltage fences to electrocute them and a pack of ferocious Alsatians and Doberman Pinschers known as the Hundestaffel, hounds of hell in savagery, trained to chew inmates to shreds.

Newsreel footage of these subjects are shown while the Newsreel Narrator talks.

CUT TO:

STINGO AND SOPHIE

She is sitting there as if paralyzed. A cry, almost like a death rattle, comes from her throat.

NEWSREEL NARRATOR (VO)
And now the big news from Paris for the Fall.

WOMAN NEWSREEL NARRATOR (VO)
Paris and Christian Dior unveil the Post War New Look in the World of Fashions. Well, ladies, the big news from Paris is hemlines are going down, down, down and shoulder pads are going off, off, off.

Stingo helps Sophie up and pushes a path for her to the aisle.

INT: THEATRE LOBBY

He takes her to a bench; she sits down.

She holds her head in her hands for a moment. Then looks up and sees how concerned Stingo is.

SOPHIE
Do not worry, Stingo. I do not die.

With an obvious effort of will, she rises. She seems herself again. Or rather, through some great feat of discipline, she has repressed the feelings that had been exposed. She takes Stingo's arm. They exit the lobby.

INT: SUBWAY

Stingo and Sophie sitting.

NARRATOR (VO)
I thought I understood the shock she had experienced. Obviously the pictures of the horrors in the camp had brought back the whole experience. But in fact she was reacting to some thing even more personal than I could then imagine. For I would later discover that she had known Reichfuhrer Rudolph Hess, The Commandant of Auschwitz.

Sophie stares at her reflection in the window, stationary,

unchanging, against the speeding background. There is a momentary look of fear. And then she turns away.

EXT: YETTA'S BOARDING HOUSE - EVENING

Stingo and Sophie are walking up to the boarding house. From its ripe pinkness, the sound of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with its transcendental choral and orchestral vastness overwhelms this fading residential street. They enter the boarding house.

INT: YETTA'S - SOPHIE AND STINGO

She starts upstairs. Stingo seems to hesitate.

SOPHIE
Nathan must have finished reading.

STINGO
If he wants to talk to me, he can come down to my room.

SOPHIE
Oh, come on now, Stingo.

She takes him by the arm and guides him upstairs. He follows unenthusiastically.

INT: SOPHIE'S ROOM

Sophie and Stingo enter. Nathan is standing in front of the record player, conducting. It is as if there is actually a giant symphony orchestra and chorus in front of him. He conducts superbly. It is like watching Toscanini -- a man totally in control. Stingo and Sophie stand in back of him, bewitched. He is remarkable to watch. He obviously has a musical gift and great intuitive skill; there is a sense of total command and comprehension.

The piece comes to an end, Nathan turns toward them, as if they were his audience, and he bows impeccably, in the manner great conductors receive their due from cheering fans. Sophie and Stingo applaud and bravo. Nathan walks by them, still the conductor, making his exit from the stage. He disappears behind the screen. There is a pause and he comes out from behind the screen, no longer the conductor, but Nathan, as they know him. It is the gift of an artist.

Nathan goes over to the table and picks up Stingo's ninety pages of manuscript and hands them back to him. His face reveals no feelings. It is totally non-commital. As Stingo accepts the return of his manuscript, we can see his effort to control his disappointment.

NATHAN
(without inflection)
You've read Faulkner, you've read Robert Penn Warren.
(pause)
I'm sure you've read Thomas Wolfe, and even Carson McCullers. I'm breaking my promise about no criticism.

Stingo sits down. He looks nauseated. And then he jumps as Nathan's big hands grasp his shoulders and his lips smear his brow with a wet and sloppy kiss. Stingo's eyes pop open and stupefied, he finds himself looking into the warmth of Nathan's radiant smile.

NATHAN (contd)
Of course you've read those writers, you wouldn't be able to write a book if you hadn't. But you've absorbed them, kid, absorbed them and made them your own. You've got your own voice. Twenty-two years old! And oh my God, you can write!
(mysteriously)
And now you must both come with me.

EXT: HALLWAY

He leads them out into the hall. Nathan stops in his room, and comes out with a knapsack on his back, the kind one uses to go camping. They follow him down the stairs.

SOPHIE
Where are you taking us?

EXT: BROOKLYN STREET - IN FRONT OF THE PINK PALACE AS THEY MARCH OUT THE DOOR - NIGHT

EXT: ANOTHER BROOKLYN STREET - NIGHT

Nathan hails a cab. He whispers instructions they can not hear to the cab driver. And then he opens the door for Sophie and Stingo. They all climb in and the cab sails off.

INT: CAB - BROOKLYN - NIGHT

As the cab stops. Nathan pays the cab driver, who looks bewildered. Nathan jumps out of the cab, and holds the door open for Sophie and Stingo who step out.

EXT: BROOKLYN BRIDGE - NIGHT

CAMERA REVEALS Nathan, Sophie and Stingo are standing in the center of the bridge, suspended high over the East River.

In the background the cab drives off, leaving them alone. Nathan takes off his knapsack, and puts it on the ground. He opens it and takes out three champagne glasses and a bottle of champagne. He opens the bottle, and carefully pours the champagne into the glasses and gives each of them a glass. Then he steps to the very edge of the bridge, and raises his glass out above the river toward the sky in a toast.

NATHAN
On this bridge, on which so many great American writers have stood and reached out for words to give America its voice, looking toward the land that gave us Whitman, who from its Eastern edge, dreamt his country's future and gave it words, on this span of which Tom Wolfe and Hart Crane wrote, we welcome Stingo, a new voice from the South that will resound across this benighted land and universe of ours. We welcome Stingo into that Pantheon of the Gods whose words are all we know of immortality. To Stingo.

Nathan touches Sophie's glass with his.

SOPHIE
(moved for Stingo and totally in love with Nathan)
To Stingo.

Nathan and Sophie drink. And then Nathan throws his glass out across the waters, and Sophie's follows. They watch as the glasses sail across the air and then down into the waters of the river.

NARRATOR (VO)
I choked stupidly on an unshaped little cluster of words, happier, I think, than at any single moment I could then remember. How could I have failed to have the most helpless crush on such a generous, mind and life enlarging mentor, pal, savior, sorcerer? Nathan was utterly, fatally glamorous.

The CAMERA, in a HELICOPTER SHOT, MOVES away from them into the air, revealing the tiny figures of Nathan, Sophie and Stingo on the ancient, soaring bridge.

INT: HALLWAY - YETTA'S

Stingo emerges from his room and goes up the stairs to Sophie's room. The door to her room is partially open. Through it,

Stingo can see Sophie dressed in some kind of robe or housecoat, standing at the far end of the big room combing her hair in front of a mirror.

INT: SOPHIE'S ROOM

Stingo enters. Sophie's back is to him. Stingo announces himself with a small cough. She turns from the mirror with a startled gasp and in doing so reveals a totally different face. Dumbfounded -- for a mercifully fleeting instant -- Stingo looks upon an old hag whose entire lower face has crumpled in upon itself, leaving a mouth like a wrinkled gash and an expression of doddering senescence. It is a mask, withered and pitiable. Making a gulping noise, Sophie slaps her hands over her mouth and flees to the bathroom. Stingo stands there in pounding embarrassment.

SOPHIE (OS)
(from bathroom)
Stingo, when are you going to learn to knock on a lady's door?

Sophie emerges from the bathroom, composed, even radiant, all the lovely components of her face reunited in a merry apotheosis of American dentistry.

SOPHIE (contd)
Nathan just telephoned from the laboratory. He wants to join us in the park for lunch. He has something important to tell us. His voice sounded so excited. I just can't imagine what it is.

STINGO
Didn't he give you any hint at all?

SOPHIE
No, but it must be something wonderful. Like you say, he was busting with this excitement.

She takes his arm.

SOPHIE (contd)
Let's go to the delicatessen. I'm swooning with hunger.

STINGO
Braunschwieger on rye, with mustard.

SOPHIE
Hot pastrami!

STINGO
Salami and swiss cheese on pumpernickel, with a pickle, half sour.

SOPHIE
(laughing)
Stop it, Stingo, you're killing me!

CUT TO:

INT: HIMMELFARB'S DELICATESSEN - SEEN THROUGH WINDOW - DAY

Sophie chooses with slow and elaborate gravity from the sourly fragrant, opulent, heroic squander of food; a pickled egg here, there a slice of salami, half a loaf of pumpernickel, lusciously glazed and black. Bratworst, Braunschweiger. Some sardines. Hot pastrami. Lox. A bagel, please.

EXT: DELICATESSEN

Stingo reaches for the brown bag of food Sophie holds, but she refuses his help, clutching the bag with almost possessive joy.

EXT: PROSPECT PARK - A PICNIC SITE BY A POND - A FAMILY OF SWANS NEARBY

Sophie carefully spreads a gay checked tablecloth on the grass and arranges the food -- like a picnic from a Renoir. What she does in laying out the picnic is wonderfully feminine and ceremonial, a celebration of the abundance of food and this free and sunny day. Stingo is falling more and more in love.

The only thing to disturb the idyllic nature of the scene is a momentary revelation of the tattoo on her arm as she places the food on the tablecloth. And below it the thin scar, on her wrist.

SOPHIE
Nathan said not to wait for him. He knows how I can not wait when I am hungry.

There is a far-off euphoric yell. Nathan appears on top of the hill. He moves with an extraordinary athletic grace, racing down the hill with great leaps that seem to make him airborne.

NATHAN
We've done it.

He lifts Sophie off the ground; and with startling strength swirls her round and round in his arms, across the field.

NATHAN (contd)
The breakthrough. We've made the final breakthrough.

SOPHIE
(laughing)
What is it? What is it?

He deposits her on the ground next to Stingo and throws himself down into her arms. He is sweating profusely.

NATHAN
Tonight. Tonight. I can not tell you 'til tonight.

STINGO
What difference will a few hours make? Tell us now.

NATHAN
Tonight you'll know. Soon the whole fucking world will know. We've done it. That bloody research team of mine has done it. One of the greatest medical advances of all time! Next year it's Stockholm, all of us together, I tell you it's Nobel Prize time. Stingo, kid, I'm gonna get there first.

He lifts Sophie up again.

NATHAN (contd)
I have to buy you something wonderful to celebrate. Come on, Stingo, we're gonna make our Sophie chic and sexy.

SOPHIE
Eat something first.

NATHAN
Tonight I'll eat. But now we buy.

He starts to pull at her like an impatient child.

SOPHIE
Wait. We have to clean up our picnic.

He pulls the tablecloth from under the food in a clean swoop like a magician, leaving all the food in jars still standing, and throws the tablecloth over all the food.

NATHAN
You can come back after we buy this wonderful dress. We have to buy it <u>now</u>.

Stingo joins them and Nathan puts his arms around the both of them as he runs them up the hill, racing into Now.

INT: DRESS SHOP - DAY

Stingo and Nathan look as Sophie emerges from a dressing room in a chic but very revealing dress.

SOPHIE
It's very ... daring, I think.

NATHAN
(still euphoric but perspiring even more)
Just look at her, Stingo. Our Sophie's a glory to us all.

Stingo looks at Sophie, entranced. He is dazzled by her sensuality.

INT: SERIES OF SHOPS AS NATHAN BUYS SOPHIE SHOES, HAT, STOCKING AND JEWELRY TO GO WITH THE DRESS

INT: JEWELRY STORE

As Nathan puts a necklace around Sophie's neck.

Suddenly he puts his hand to the back of his head. He seems very pale and is sweating even more profusely. Sophie is immediately aware of the change. It is as if she was half *expecting or dreading* it.

A look of excruciating pain shoots across his face. His clothes now are drenched with sweat.

SOPHIE
(pleading)
My darling, please go home, please rest. Take the afternoon off. You must take care of yourself.

The lady from the boutique comes over with a bottle of aspirin and a glass of water. He quickly swallows three aspirin.

He seems calmer now, almost a little sad. He gets up, slowly, his whole body rhythm calmer, slower now. He kisses Sophie. Quietly. Gently.

NATHAN
(softly, as if drained)
I have to be back at the laboratory. Stingo, take my beautiful Sophie home in her beautiful dress. We'll celebrate tonight.

He exits the boutique, leaving Sophie and Stingo looking after him.

SOPHIE
(concerned)
Sometimes when he gets excited so much and gets so happy -- then he gets these terrible headaches and sweats so much it go through his clothes, like he's been in the rain. Then the happiness is gone.

STINGO
Listen. Anyone with the story Nathan is going to tell has a right to act a little peculiar.

EXT: PORCH OUTSIDE OF SOPHIE'S ROOM

Window to the room is open and music comes from record player.

Sophie is in her daring new dress, her hair freshly done, and Stingo has on his good clothes, the jacket and tie he wore to Leslie's.

SOPHIE
Dr. Katz really went out of his way. His wife's firm is in the wholesale business in jewelry. He drove me over there which was really so kind of him. I thought I'd be able to have it for tonight for Nathan's news. But it will take them a day to have it monogrammed. It's such a wonderful old fashioned pocket watch. The kind Pappa used to wear. It was more than I could afford but, oh, Stingo, on a day like today, well, money don't seem important. He will be surprised.

STINGO
God, from the way he was carrying on, do you think he discovered the cure for cancer? A fucking cure for cancer!

SOPHIE
Isn't it incredible, isn't it formidable?

She turns and sees Nathan standing in the doorway.

SOPHIE (contd)
Nathan!

Nathan stands silhouetted in the doorway, directly in back of them. He is decked out in his fanciest oyster-white linen suit and heavy gold links sparkle on the cuffs of his custom-made shirt.

NATHAN
(the voice is chilling)
Haven't I told you that the only single thing I absolutely demand from you is fidelity?

Sophie can say nothing. All the anticipation on her face has turned to dread.

NATHAN (contd)
And didn't I tell you that if you were ever with this guy Katz ... ever again, outside of work ... that if you ever so much as walked ten feet with this cheap shmatte, I'd break your ass?

SOPHIE
Yes, but ...

NATHAN
And this afternoon he brings you home again in his car! You spent the whole fucking afternoon with him, didn't you? Or should I say you spent the whole afternoon with him, fucking? Did you try on your new dress for him so he could strip it off in some cheap hotel room? Oh, I bet Katz does quite a number with that fast chiropractor's dick of his!

STINGO
How the hell did you know Katz brought her home? For Christ's sake, where the hell have you been all afternoon? Following poor Sophie around? Jesus, Nathan! You're going to feel like a God awful fool when you find out why Katz picked her up.

SOPHIE
Please, Stingo, don't.

NATHAN
Our baby Southern artiste! -- Defending the little Pollak whore. Too bad our celebration will be of a more mundane stripe than I had intended.

He exits onto the porch to get the wine.

SOPHIE
Stingo, leave, Stingo, <u>please</u> leave.

STINGO
I won't leave you alone with him.

SOPHIE
Your being here will only make it worse.

STINGO
I'm not going to let him get away with this shit.

SOPHIE
You don't understand.

Nathan brings in a bottle of wine and glasses. The pupils of his eyes are the size of dimes. His face has softened somewhat, no longer quite the rancorous mask it had been only moments before. But the pierce straight-jacketed tension remains in the muscles of the cheek and neck and the sweat pours forth; it stands out on his brow in droplets. As he hands them the wine glasses, WE SEE the great crescents of soaked white fabric underneath his arms.

He pours wine into their glasses. Sophie's hand holding the out-stretched glass, is quivering. She raises her glass, as if out of dumb reflexive obedience.

Stingo reaches forward and lightly, affectionately taps the back of Nathan's arm.

STINGO
Now let's cut all this ugly shit and let's all relax while you tell us, for Christ sake, just tell us exactly what the hell it is we're going to celebrate! Man, tonight we want to make all the toasts to you!

Nathan withdraws his arm. He raises his glass and downs the wine in a single swallow.

NATHAN
This toast is in honor of my complete disassociation from you two creeps.
(with a tip of his glass at Sophie)
Disassociation from you, the Coony Chiropractic Cunt of King's County.
(then to Stingo)
And from you, the Dreary Dregs of Dixie.

Nathan's eyes are as lifeless as billiard balls, sweat drains from his face in torrents.

NATHAN (contd)
You have not fooled me, young Stingo, since you graciously allowed me to discover your ingrained and unregenerate
(MORE)

NATHAN (contd)
racism, that night you let me read the first part of your magnum Southern opus.

STINGO
(incredulous -- stunned)
What?

NATHAN
(in a Southern accent imitative of Stingo's)
You have a pretty snappy talent in the traditional Southern mode. But you also have all the old cliches. I guess I didn't want to bruise your feelings. You may be writing the first Southern comic book.

His voice loses the faint throaty Negroid quality and in moist metamorphosis the Southern accent fades and dies, replaced by thorny Polish dipthongs that are in almost exact mimicry of Sophie's own speech.

NATHAN (contd)
(turning to Sophie)
Peut-etre after all dese mawnths, you kin explain de mystewy of why you are here, you off all people, walking dese stweets, dwenched in enticing perfurmery, engaged in suweptitious venery wiff not wan but two -- cout dem, ladies and gentlemen -- two chiropractos. In short, making hay while de sun shine, to employ an old bwomide, while at Auschwitz de ghosts off de millions off de dead still seek an answer.

Suddenly dropping the parody.

NATHAN (contd)
Tell me why it is, old beauteous Zawistowska, that you inhabit the land of the living. Did splendid little tricks and strategems spring from that lovely head of yours to allow you to breathe the clear Polish air while the multitudes at Auschwitz choked slowly on the gas? A reply to this would be most welcome.

A terrible drawn-out groan escapes Sophie.

SOPHIE
No! No! Menteu! Lies!

NATHAN
Did the same anti-Semitism for which Poland has gained such worldwide renown -- did a similar anti-Semitism guide your own destiny, help you along, protect you, in a manner of speaking, so that you became one of the miniscule handful of people who lived while the millions died?
(his voice harsh, cutting, cruel)
Explanation, please!

SOPHIE
No! No!

STINGO
Nathan, for Christ sake, lay off her!

NATHAN
What fine handiwork of subterfuge did you create in order that your skin might be saved while the others went up in smoke? Did you cheat, connive, lay your sweet little ass ...

SOPHIE
(a deep groan)
No!

Stingo goes toward Nathan, his knees quaking.

STINGO
Look, you bastard ...

Sophie throws herself between Stingo and Nathan.

SOPHIE
For God's sake, Stingo, get out! Get out!

He stumbles out of the room, and down the steps and out the door.

EXT: STREET

Stingo blindly flees.

EXT: YETTA'S HOUSE - LATER THAT EVENING

Stingo awash with beer, comes toward the house. He stops before going up the front steps and looks up at Sophie's room. A soft glow of light blossoms out from beneath Sophie's window blind, indicating that she might be there. And there is the sound of music; either her radio or her phonograph playing. The lovely and plaintive sound of a Haydn concerto for cello.

INT: HALL

As Stingo climbs the stairs. He knocks at the door of Sophie's room. There is no answer. He opens the door. The room looks as if it had been turned upside down; dresser drawers have been pulled out and emptied, the bed has been stripped, the closet ransacked. The shelves have been emptied of books. The phonograph records are gone. There is a single exception to the general look of plunder ... the radio-phonograph. Doubtless too large and bulky to have been lugged off, it remains on the table, and the sound of the Haydn emanating from its gorge is eerie, as if it is music in a concert hall from which the audience has mysteriously fled. Stingo crosses to Nathan's room across the hall. The door is open. The effect is the same; all the personal effects have been removed except for the endless piles of books. The heat hangs close and sticky in the hallway; we hear the sound of steam heat hissing from a radiator on this hot late summer evening. Behind the radiator at one end of the room, behind the drapes, is a crouching figure. He is laboring over the steaming radiator. He stands up, revealing it is Morris Fink.

MORRIS FINK
Nathan must of turned it on by accident a little while ago when he was running around with his suitcase and things. <u>There</u>, you cocksucker.
(he snarls at the radiator, giving it a kick)
That'll fix your guts.

The steam expires with a little hiss.

STINGO
Where are they?

MORRIS FINK
They're gone, both of them. They finally cut out for good.

STINGO
What do you mean, for <u>good</u>?

MORRIS FINK
Nathan gave me a buck to help bring the baggage down, also to take care of the phonograph. He threw me thirty dollars to give to Yetta for the rent, and hailed two cabs. And all the time he's asking her this weirdo question over and over. Asking her how come she <u>lived through Owswitch</u>. Then he gave her fifty bucks. She went off in the
(MORE)

MORRIS FINK (contd)
cab. He said something about how happy he'd be never to have to see her again. He took the other cab and left in the opposite direction.

STINGO
Gone?

MORRIS FINK
Gone for good, and good fuckin' riddance I say. That guy was a golem! But Sophie ... Sophie I feel sorry for. Sophie was a real nice broad, you know?

The sound of the Haydn cello piece still plays in the background.

STINGO
Yes, I know.

Morris Fink turns and crosses to the door. Then turns back.

MORRIS FINK
(an afterthought)
What's Owswitch?

INT: STINGO'S ROOM - NIGHT

Stingo lying awake in bed.

NARRATOR (VO)
I lay awake listening for the sound of Sophie, trying to will her to return.

INT: STINGO'S ROOM - MORNING

Stingo awake.

The sound of footsteps upstairs. Stingo leaps out of bed. He runs out into the hallway.

INT: HALLWAY - DAY

Stingo in his pajamas, barefooted, climbs the stairs three at a time.

STINGO
Sophie?

SOPHIE'S ROOM

It is empty. He turns around as he hears the noise coming from Nathan's room. He goes into Nathan's room.

INT: NATHAN'S ROOM

Two moving men are packing Nathan's books in cartons. They look up at him.

STINGO
(desolate)
Oh.

EXT: BROOKLYN MEDICAL BUILDING - DAY

Stingo entering.

INT: HALLWAY - MEDICAL BUILDING

Stingo opens door, on which is Dr. Blackstock's name.

INT: DR. BLACKSTOCK'S RECEPTION ROOM

The receptionist is dressed in the same white uniform Sophie wears. Her back is to Stingo. Her hair is Sophie's color. It could be Sophie.

STINGO
Sophie?

The woman turns around. It is not Sophie.

RECEPTIONIST
Miss Zawistowska is out sick today.

STINGO
Do you know where I could reach her?

RECEPTIONIST
I really don't.

The interior door opens, revealing Dr. Blackstock escorting a patient out.

DR. BLACKSTOCK
Thank you for the cookies, Mrs. Birnbaum ...

PATIENT
(exiting)
My cugel is what I have to make for you.

DR. BLACKSTOCK
Just don't stand over that stove too much. Even for your doctor.

STINGO
Excuse me, Dr. Blackstock. I'm a good
(MORE)

STINGO (contd)
friend of Sophie Zawistowska. Maybe you've heard of me. Stingo.

DR. BLACKSTOCK
Oh, the writer. Sophie's very proud of you.

STINGO
I'm trying to get in touch with her.

DR. BLACKSTOCK
But you live in the same house.

STINGO
She moved out last night.

DR. BLACKSTOCK
(concerned)
Moved out? But when she called in this morning she wasn't well. She said she might be out for a couple of weeks. She sounded -- well, I was worried about her. That poor girl.
(he shakes his head)
She's been through -- we can't imagine what she's been through. Such a darling girl.

STINGO
You have no idea where she is?

DR. BLACKSTOCK
What about the boyfriend?

STINGO
I think that's over.

DR. BLACKSTOCK
What about her friends? Maybe she went to stay with a friend.

STINGO
(realizing)
I don't know any friends of hers.

DR. BLACKSTOCK
There was this Polish girl who worked in the Consulate ... the Polish Consulate ... in Manhattan. I think they met in English class.

STINGO
Do you know her name?

DR. BLACKSTOCK
It was one of those Polish names ending in Ski or Skiya. Sonja, that was her first name. Sonja. She used to call her a lot. Before Sophie started seeing Nathan. Let me know what you find out.
(he shakes his head)
Such a darling girl!

EXT: MANHATTAN OFFICE BUILDING

Stingo entering.

INT: POLISH CONSULATE

Stingo enters. It is a small office. One person sits behind a desk, a man.

STINGO
Excuse me. Does a woman named Sonja work here?

MAN
Sonja Pulaski?

STINGO
I think that must be her.

MAN
She went back to Poland six months ago.

STINGO
Oh. Thank you.

He starts to leave, then turns back.

STINGO (contd)
You wouldn't by chance know a woman named Sophie Zawistowska?

MAN
No. I'm afraid not.

Stingo starts to leave again.

MAN
She wouldn't be a relation of <u>Professor</u> Zawistowska?

STINGO
I think that must have been her father. He taught at the University of Cracow before the war.

MAN
I went to the University of Cracow before the war.

STINGO
He was an extraordinary man, I gather.

MAN
You might say that.

STINGO
Did you take one of his classes?

MAN
I heard him lecture once. That was enough.

STINGO
(puzzled)
He was very outspoken about the Nazis.

MAN
He was crazy about the Nazis!
(with disgust)
I think because they hated Jews as much as he did.

STINGO
The Nazis killed him!

MAN
Ironic. Or you could call it poetic justice. They just made a clean sweep of Academics one day. They didn't stop to check their political convictions.

STINGO
You must be talking about someone else.

MAN
If it was Professor Zawistowska who taught Law at the University of Cracow, that's the man.

He goes over to a bookcase filled with Polish encyclopedias and pulls one down.

MAN (contd)
Here. I'll show you.

He thumbs through the encyclopedia.

MAN (contd)
Ah. Here we are. I'll translate it into
(MORE)

MAN (contd)
English for you. Let's see. Zawistowska, Professor of Law at the University of Cracow from 1919-1939. Known for anti-Semitic tracts. A major promulgater of the ghetto Bench Rule which made it illegal for Jewish students to sit on the same bench as Poles.

As he reads on, WE CUT to Stingo, stunned, disbelieving.

EXT: STREET

As Stingo emerges from office building.

INT: BAR

Stingo getting soundly, squarely smashed.

NARRATOR (VO)
I no longer knew what to believe or disbelieve about this woman I had adored. Could it be that every thing she'd said was lies? Could there be any truth in Nathan's accusations of deception? What other lies about her past had I believed? The more I drank the more I wallowed in my disillusionment.

EXT: PROSPECT PARK - EVENING

Stingo walking through the park. He walks beside the pond where he and Sophie had laid their picnic. Finally giving in to his exhaustion, he throws himself face down, upon the grass. From the distance, we hear the sound of a band concert in the park. A rousing arrangement of a John Philip Sousa march.

SOPHIE (VO)
Stingo.

He sits up, not sure he isn't fantasizing. There, sitting in the shadows, among the trees, is Sophie.

SOPHIE (contd)
I was over at the house. You weren't there.

He says nothing.

SOPHIE (contd)
I'm sorry for what happened.

He still says nothing.

SOPHIE (contd)
Nathan didn't mean what he said about your book. I know he truly loves your writing.

He still says nothing.

SOPHIE (contd)
You must try not to judge Nathan for the way he acted. You must understand. It is the drugs.

STINGO
The drugs?

SOPHIE
You know, Stingo, you know that Nathan was always taking drugs.

STINGO
What kind of drugs?

SOPHIE
He took this stuff called Benzedrine, also cocaine. But huge doses. Enough sometimes to make him crazy.

STINGO
I didn't know.
(pause)
It doesn't matter now.

SOPHIE
We will still see each other. You have been so much my good friend.

STINGO
I'm leaving. I'm going home.

SOPHIE
Oh.

STINGO
It's just a better place to write. To work for me.

SOPHIE
We have driven you away.

STINGO
It has nothing to do with you.

SOPHIE
(trying to understand his coldness)
I should have left a note. I'm sorry.
(MORE)

SOPHIE (contd)
I didn't think. You have been so kind to us. To me.

STINGO
I met Dr. Blackstock.

SOPHIE
Today?

STINGO
Yes.

SOPHIE
At his office?

STINGO
Yes.

SOPHIE
Oh, Stingo. You were looking for me.

STINGO
And then I saw the Polish Consulate.

SOPHIE
The Polish Consulate?

STINGO
In Manhattan.

SOPHIE
I don't understand.

STINGO
Dr. Blackstock said you had a friend who worked in the Polish Consulate.

SOPHIE
Sonja. But she went back to Poland.

STINGO
That's what he told me.

SOPHIE
He?

STINGO
The man there.

SOPHIE
Oh. I feel bad I made you so worried.

STINGO
He knew your father.

SOPHIE
My father?

STINGO
Well, not exactly knew. He heard him lecture once. At the University of Cracow. I believe that's where your father taught.

SOPHIE
(almost no voice at all)
Yes.

He rises.

STINGO
I have to go. I should pack and get my things together. I expect I'll take the morning train.

He starts to leave.

SOPHIE
He told you about my father.

STINGO
Why did you lie about him?

SOPHIE
I was afraid I would be left alone.

She gets up from the grass and goes over to Stingo.

SOPHIE (contd)
Goodbye, my friend.

She starts away in the opposite direction from Stingo.

STINGO
Don't go.

SOPHIE
I should have gone before.

STINGO
I want to understand.

SOPHIE
I do not understand, myself.

She walks away.

STINGO
I won't leave you, Sophie.

She stops and turns toward him. He goes toward her and takes her in his arms.

She holds him in her arms. And then they sit on the grass together, comforting each other.

SOPHIE
You want to understand me. You want to know about my life.

STINGO
I promise I won't leave you.

SOPHIE
You are sure you want to know?

The CAMERA MOVES into a CLOSE SHOT of Sophie, looking off into the distance, as if she is looking back into the past. The sounds of the band concert fade away. There is a beat of silence and then we hear the sound of the child's flute playing the simple exercise we heard at the beginning of the film.

SOPHIE (contd)
I'm not sure I know what was my life, after all the lies I've told myself.

WE CUT to Sophie's POV of the swan and the lake. It is slowly engulfed in blackness.

A thin slit of light cuts through the blackness, slashing across the screen, like a tear or rip, from top to bottom. The CAMERA MOVES toward the narrow slit.

We are looking out through a crack in the boarded up window of a train. WE SEE a glimpse of a railroad yard at night. A soldier in Nazi uniform is stationed across the tracks in the distance. The soldier and the railroad yard seem to slide behind us as the train begins to move.

The screen now bleaches to the harsh and empty white we saw at the beginning of the film. The flute fades away, leaving us in total silence.

SOPHIE (VO)
You know, I can barely remember how my husband looked.

STINGO (VO)
(trying to help)
What was he like?

SOPHIE (VO)
He worshipped my father. I married very
(MORE)

SOPHIE (VO contd)
young. I did not bring home a husband for myself! I brought a son home for my father. My father -- all the bad things in my life begin with him. Oh, how can I explain ... how much I loved my father!

The following scenes in the past are WITHOUT SOUND, unless otherwise indicated.

The image of a young Polish man appears. He is properly dressed except his vest is open, his tie loosened, and shirt sleeves rolled up. He looks up past the audience with great amusement and affection. A little blonde-haired girl on a swing sails back onto the screen. Her face is alive with pleasure. He pushes her away from him. She sails out of sight again. Again the father's eyes follow her. And back she comes. Everything the father does, even the way he pushes the child on the swing, is done with deliberation and precision.

The father reaches into his vest pocket, checks his watch and stops the swing.

SOPHIE (VO)
My father believed that human perfection was a possibility if we only had the strength of will.

He lifts Sophie off the swing. She buries herself in his arms.

SOPHIE (VO contd)
He tried to will me perfect.

INT: PARLOR - SOPHIE'S HOUSE IN CRACOW - 1924 - MEDIUM SHOT - SOPHIE'S FATHER

The vest is now buttoned up, the tie perfectly arranged, and a very precisely tailored jacket sits on his precisely erect shoulders. He holds a coffee cup and saucer very tightly in his hands. He is straining forward, mouthing words.

THE FATHER'S POV

Sophie as a little girl in a perfect little party dress, reciting something in German to company. She constantly looks toward her father for help or reassurance. She is doing well. He beams with pride.

The little girl hesitates, then makes a mistake. She looks toward her father, afraid. The father frowns.

EXT: PROSPECT PARK - CLOSE SHOT - SOPHIE - EVENING - 1947

Sophie looking back at her father in the past. The look of fear on her face in reaction to his frown is the same fear we saw on the little girl's face, the same fear we saw on her face when Nathan showed displeasure.

SOPHIE
My fear in life was disappointing him.

INT: LECTURE HALL - UNIVERSITY OF CRACOW - SOPHIE'S POV - 1924

Her father on a rostrum. He is shot from the POV of a child in the audience looking up at him.

SOPHIE (VO)
How I remember the first night I heard him speak in public. It was the first time I was allowed to stay up so late.

The father smiles down benignly. From his daughter's POV, he looks like a triumphant god. The little girl, sitting proudly in the audience, returns his smile. Then she looks in back of her and sees the rows of people looking up at him. She turns back and looks up at him in awe.

SOPHIE (VO contd)
That was the first time I saw the other man my father was. The Public Man.

FATHER ON ROSTRUM ... LECTURING

Although this is done silently, he has obviously begun to shout. He gesticulates wildly with his hands. The face that until now has been in total control, seems to explode with anger.

SOPHIE (VO contd)
I had never seen his rage before. He was talking about the Jews, the alien Jews who had no right to compete with honest Poles for jobs in a depressed economy. The audience applauded. They even cheered my father.

MEDIUM SHOT - SOPHIE AS A LITTLE GIRL, FRIGHTENED BY HER FATHER

SOPHIE (VO contd)
I could not cheer. Not because I cared at all about the Jews.

EXT: PROSPECT PARK - CLOSE SHOT - SOPHIE - EVENING - 1947

SOPHIE
I was frightened by my father's anger, and what could happen if it should turn on me.

We hear the sound of a very tinny voice slowly dictating a speech. It is as removed from the sound of life as those voices we've heard on very early records.

CLOSE SHOT - SOPHIE'S POV

Old European dictating cylinder as it circles under the needle. Her father's voice squawks out of it, squeezed of all humanity. (WITH SOUND)

SOPHIE (VO)
After I married, I shared my father with my husband. He taught under him at the university and I worked for him at home.

INT: FATHER'S STUDY - CRACOW - 1935

Sophie, a young woman in her teens, is typing at an ancient typewriter. She has on earphones through which she hears her father's recorded dictation.

SOPHIE (VO)
I had fulfilled my dream. I had made my father proud of me. Until another speech changed all that forever. He had worked for weeks in private on that speech. I was to copy it that afternoon and deliver it to him at the university where he was to speak that night. Ordinarily I typed without listening to the meaning. But this time I found one word repeated several times. A word I'd never heard him use before, "The only solution for the Jewish problem" he had concluded, "was Die Vernichtung." Extinction.

Sophie rewinds the cylinder and replays the same section. As if she could not believe what she had heard. She turns off the machine, takes out the earphones, and sits there, shaken.

EXT: CRACOW - 1937

Sophie gets into streetcar.

SOPHIE (VO)
I had had little to do with Jewish people.

INT: STREETCAR

Sophie stands, staring at the people, as if wondering which are Jews.

SOPHIE (VO)
And until I heard that word, I'd had little curiosity about them.

EXT: GHETTO STREET - CRACOW - EVENING

Sophie silhouetted against the fading afternoon light.

SOPHIE (VO)
I had not planned to visit the Ghetto when I left the house that afternoon, but without my knowing it, something inside of me must have impelled me there.

EXT: GHETTO STREET - CRACOW - SOPHIE'S POV - EVENING

Life in the Jewish Quarter.

SOPHIE (VO)
I watched the Jewish women gossiping with each other, or hurrying home with bags of food. I heard them call their children in from play. For all these people, these women, these men, these children: Die Vernichtung -- Extinction. For hours I stood there in the shadows, watching the people my father had condemned to die.

INT: FATHER'S STUDY - CRACOW - EVENING

Sophie with earphones on, blindly typing.

SOPHIE (VO)
Never before had I dared to be late with my father.

She pulls it out of the typewriter and without proof-reading, grabs up the other pages and runs from the room.

EXT: CRACOW STREETS - EVENING

Shots of Sophie running through the medieval streets, as in a nightmare. As if she is running and getting nowhere.

SOPHIE (VO)
I raced through the streets to the University.

INT: BACKSTAGE AUDITORIUM

Sophie rushes backstage and hands the speech to her father.

SOPHIE (VO)
My father had no time to even check the speech.

SOPHIE'S POV
Her father's anger as he takes the speech from her.

INT: AUDITORIUM - SOPHIE'S FATHER AT LECTERN SPEAKING

Confused at what he reads.

SOPHIE (VO)
In my hysteria, and haste, I had mistyped so much. I had confused thoughts and sentences until they made no sense.

Sophie's father flushes at his mistakes and turns his angry eyes on Sophie. Sophie -- in the audience -- looks away from him.

HOLD ON CLOSE UP IMAGE of father's face, his rage stamped forever on her memory.

SOPHIE (VO contd)
After he finished speaking, he came up to me and in front of my husband, and his friends, he said to me: "Your intelligence is pulp." I could not find the courage to even question him about the Jews. But he did not trust me after that and neither did my husband.

EXT: CRACOW STREET - OUTSIDE THE UNIVERSITY COURTYARD

Sophie held at bay by Nazi soldiers, watches the vans containing her father and her husband and the other University professors.

SOPHIE (VO)
When we were notified my father and my husband had been shot, had been exterminated -- I wondered: Had I, the good and loving wife and daughter wished my father and my husband dead?

THE VANS DISAPPEARING - SOPHIE'S POV

SOPHIE (VO contd)
Had I become an Angel of Death to those I should have loved the most?

EXT: CRACOW STREET - OUTSIDE THE UNIVERSITY COURTYARD

CLOSE SHOT of Sophie's terrified face, as the vans disappear. After a moment, her face is engulfed in blackness, relieved only by the narrow slash of light in the middle of the screen. The sound of the child's flute is heard again.

INT: TRAIN - BOARDED UP WINDOW

CAMERA MOVES through the narrow slit of light, and peers

through the crack again. The movement of the countryside indicates the train has picked up speed. The virgin fields slide by in the gradually breaking early morning light.

The screen bleaches to white. The flute fades away, leaving us again in total silence.

A gentle young man's face appears on the screen, shot from the POV of a woman holding him in her arms.

SOPHIE (VO)
Afterwards, in Warsaw, I had a lover who was good to me.

He reaches down to the woman, and as he does, the CAMERA PANS down, revealing Sophie looking up at him.

SOPHIE (VO contd)
Jozef was younger than me by a few years. But for all his youth and gentleness, he was strong.

He kisses her with more tenderness than passion, as if they have just finished making love. She turns on her side and he curls up next to her, in a spoon position; both of them with their knees drawn up as in the fetal position, he in back of her, his arms clasped protectively around her. They close their eyes. It is a peaceful, innocent picture of two safe young lovers.

DISSOLVE TO:

EARLY MORNING LIGHT

Sophie asleep in the same position. CAMERA PULLS BACK revealing her lover is no longer there. And then he drops down INTO CAMERA, as he slides back into the bed, and holds her once again.

INT: FACTORY

Sophie one of many workers, in factory dress.

SOPHIE (VO)
In Warsaw I worked in a factory that made tar paper. I didn't work for money, really, but to keep a work card. A work card would keep me from being sent off to Germany to a camp for slave labor.

The factory whistle blows, and the workers put down their tools and begin to leave.

EXT: WARSAW STREET - DAY - 1943

Sophie returning home from work.

EXT: WARSAW STREET - DAY

Nazis leading Jews from cellar of bombed out building at gunpoint. Sophie stares at them, at their terrified faces, at the yellow badges on their sleeves. And then she turns away. She walks more rapidly.

EXT: WARSAW STREET

Another bombed out but still inhabited building, as Sophie walks inside.

INT: STAIRCASE OF BOMBED OUT BUT STILL INHABITED BUILDING

As Sophie climbs the stairs.

SOPHIE (VO)
I lived in a tiny little room on the fourth floor of a bombed out building and Jozef lived with Wanda, his half sister, downstairs.

As she nears her floor, we hear the sound of a child playing the flute. Again, it is a pied piper sound that seems to draw her to it. She smiles. It is the only time in this section of the film that WE SEE her smile. She quickens her pace as she draws closer to the sound of the flute. She unlocks the door to her room. As it opens, the flute becomes louder; then softer as she disappears inside and shuts the door.

CLOSE SHOT

A woman's hand puts a snapshot down on a plain wooden table, lit only by a candle.

At first the snapshot seems to be of just a jumble of sticks -- a great mass of sticks like small tree limbs. It takes a moment of adjustment to its somewhat blurred contents for us to realize we are looking at a boxcar full of dead children.

WANDA (VO)
This picture was taken by Home Army members who broke into the boxcars on a siding somewhere between Smosc and Lublin.

MEDIUM SHOT

Sophie and Josef sitting on one side of a little table.

The tiny room is only lit by the one candle. Jozef holds Sophie's hand protectively. For a moment there is only the sound of their breathing.

CUT TO:

WANDA

Across the table looking down at the picture. She is a strong, raw-boned young woman.

WANDA
(choked and unsteady in her grief)
We believe they are the rejected children from the Germanization program. The Lebensborn program. They were among the thousands who were taken from their Polish parents who at first were believed to have the Aryan racial characteristics. They were to be taken to Germany to be raised as Germans but at some point it was decided they were not racially suitable after all, and so they were consigned for disposal ... meaning extermination ...

Wanda begins to sway a little. Sophie catches her by the elbow and tries to make her sit down. But Wanda refuses. She looks directly at Sophie.

WANDA
You must help us, Zosia, you must join us.

SOPHIE
Please. Do not ask me any more.

WANDA
Do you know what Jozef does when he leaves your bed in the middle of the night?

JOZEF
There is no reason for her to know.

WANDA
There is every reason. If she cares about you.
(she looks directly at Sophie)
You know there are Jews hiding out all over Warsaw. And you know there are many Polish people who betray the Jews to the Nazis, sometimes for a price, sometimes for nothing. Jozef tries to get to know
(MORE)

WANDA (contd)
them, these Polish people that are betraying Jews. And then he strangles them with the wire from a piano. After he has killed, he comes back to your bed.
(pause)
And all we ask of you is to translate those documents that were stolen yesterday from that Gestapo van. We could have some of those documents delivered to you here, quite safely. No one would suspect.

SOPHIE
You know I can't.

She crosses to the window.

WANDA
Other women do. Women with children who have no friends to help take care of them. Zosia, does it mean nothing that it helps your lover? Those documents or one day some other documents might contain the key to all of our survival.

Sophie looks out the window.

SOPHIE'S POV

The street below ... A little girl of six with yellow pig-tails and a serious faced little boy, a few years older, are playing on the street. One looks up and smiles at her. And then the other waves.

She turns back to Wanda.

SOPHIE
I can not endanger my children. I will not get involved.

Jozef puts his arm around her.

JOZEF
(to Wanda)
Do not torture her.

EXT: WARSAW STREET - NIGHT

Sophie walking on a bombed out Warsaw street. All the lights go out in the building across the street and WE SEE huge German headlights beamed on its facade. She looks bewildered for a moment, then hypnotized, as the German searchlights blind and trap the people they are flushing out. She runs across the street and around the corner.

EXT: WARSAW STREET - NIGHT

Sophie rushes toward her building, relieved to see the normal lights are on. She runs inside and shuts the door.

INT: *SOPHIE'S BUILDING - NIGHT*

She pauses a moment and catches her breath, relishing the sense of safety. And then she climbs the stairs.

INT: SOPHIE'S BUILDING - LANDING ON STAIRCASE - NIGHT

As she turns the corner on the landing, she trips and falls onto the dead body of her lover, Jozef. She finds herself staring into his dead but open eyes. His throat is slit. She is covered with his blood. She starts to scream but no sound comes out. She runs up the stairs, still screaming her silent screams. She does not stop until she gets to her room, opens the door, then slams it shut.

INT: SOPHIE'S ROOM - WARSAW - NIGHT

She rushes into the arms of her two children. She holds them in her arms and buries herself in their bodies. The little girl still holds her flute.

SOPHIE (VO)
Jan, my son, loved to draw.

CAMERA PANS above Sophie and her children, to a row of children's drawings pasted on the walls. From their clothes and stature and the color of their hair, we recognize that one of them is a drawing of Wanda and Jozef.

SOPHIE (VO contd)
He drew a picture of Wanda and Jozef once. He had no idea what they did, but he made them look like heroes.

EXT: PROSPECT PARK - TIGHT CLOSE UP - NIGHT - 1947

Sophie looking at the child's drawing in the past.

STINGO (VO)
(incredulous)
You had two children.
(pause)
Does Nathan know about the children?

SOPHIE
I told him once I had a son. He asked me if he was still alive. I told him I do not think so.

STINGO (VO)
But you didn't tell him you also had a daughter?

There is a long silence; as if the question is one she cannot *bring herself to answer.*

INT: TRAIN - BOARDED UP WINDOW

CAMERA PEERS through the narrow, jagged slit of light. It is now bright noon day sunlight. The countryside moves away from us more quickly. The train is rushing toward its destination. We hear the child's melody on the flute.

SOPHIE (VO)
Not long after they killed Jozef, I was *arrested. My children were sent with* me to Auschwitz.

The light outside the boarded window of the train suddenly hits the occupants of the compartment in such a way that for the first time the reflections of the interior are revealed. WE SEE the image of Sophie huddled next to the window clutching her two children. Her daughter sits in her lap, holding onto her flute, the way some children suck their thumb. They are surrounded by heads and bodies of people jammed into the small compartment. The faces WE SEE are weak and haunted; the people are packed into the compartment like animals in a stockyard. It could be a hallucination of people on the way to hell.

SOPHIE (VO contd)
When the train arrived at Auschwitz, the Germans made the SELECTION: who could work and who should die.

CAMERA MOVES in more closely on the reflection in the window so that it only contains the faces of Sophie and her two children.

SOPHIE (VO contd)
Jan, my little boy, was sent to the place they called the Children's Camp, and Eva, my little girl, was sent to Crematorium II at Birkenau ...

CAMERA MOVES in more closely on the reflection until the image of Sophie's little daughter, clutching her flute, fills the screen.

SOPHIE (VO contd)
She was exterminated.

The sound of the flute stops. The screen turns to empty white.

What seems like gray smoke gradually starts to appear on the left hand side of the screen near the top. And then gradually the whole scene bleeds in.

EXT: AUSCHWITZ - DAY

In the background is a building with a sign that says Crematorium II. Gray smoke billows up from it, occasionally with pink embers near the bottom. In the center of the screen is a long, wretchedly muddy street lined with barracks, and populated by the damned of Auschwitz.

SOPHIE (VO)
Thanks to my perfect German, and my secretarial skills, everything my father had taught me so I could serve him, I found myself among a small elite of those prisoners who fulfilled some function that the SS deemed indispensable.

Sophie appears from around a corner of the street, accompanied by a prison guard. Her hair has been shaved off. Her bald scalp shines in the morning light. She is dressed in castoff rags. She walks down the street toward the CAMERA, staring straight ahead. She is thin, ravaged looking, dazed. In back of her, the smoke from Crematorium II billows toward the sky.

SOPHIE (VO contd)
And that is how I came to work for Reichfuhrer Rudolph Hoess, Commandant of Auschwitz-Birkenau.

The CAMERA DOLLIES with Sophie and the guard. She keeps walking, staring straight ahead, neither looking toward the left or the right. They pass a barracks which unlike the others, has bars on its windows. Hundreds of hands reach out through the bars.

SOPHIE (VO contd)
The day they took me to Hoess's house -- for I was to live there as one of his servants -- they walked me through the camp ... and I was forced to walk past Block II, the building we all avoided. Prisoners who had been selected for extermination were put in Cell Block II. They were left there, waiting to be taken to the ovens. Thousands of people, jammed together, naked, without food or water, without a place to shit, they were sometimes left there for three or four days. Their hands reached out between the bars, as they pleaded for a little water.

EXT: AUSCHWITZ

The hands reaching out through the bars from Cell Block II, as Sophie walks by with the guard. She keeps looking straight ahead.

EXT: IDYLLIC COUNTRY HOUSE - MORNING

The house of the Commandant of Auschwitz, Reichfuhrer Rudolph Hoess. It is alive with warmth and life, a paean to the joys of country living. There are all sorts of pet animals in the yard. On one side is a garden full of fresh vegetables with a greenhouse beyond. On the other side a gardener is tending a breathtaking flower garden, full of fall flowers. The gardener is in prison clothes.

Four plump, happy children are playing in the yard. Each of them has a different arm band on his arm, imitations of the arm bands the prisoners wear; the different emblems and colors that signify the status of each prisoner at Auschwitz. They chase and shout at each other in glee. They are having a splendid time playing "Prisoner."

Sophie, escorted by her prison guard, walks into this idyllic scene, a hellish figure in the midst of paradise.

It is a sunny day, but the scene is just slightly marred by a thin haze that creeps over the sunshine, not unlike Los Angeles on a slightly smoggy day. We hear the far off sound of a band playing swing tunes of the period, languorous tangos, jazz numbers and popular ballads, so faint that they could be ghost sounds of long remembered gaiety.

REVERSE SHOT - REVEALING SOPHIE HEAD ON

From this angle WE SEE the view from the house. In the middle distance, there is a glimpse of the railroad platform where the selection of the new arrivals takes place. Lines of box-cars stand waiting there.

WE SEE fragmentary, flickering apparitions; a rifle butt raised skyward, dead bodies being yanked from boxcar doors, a papier-mache human being bullied to the earth. S.S. guards in swirls of steam surround the train. Parallel to the box-cars, some soldiers open the back doors of ambulance-like vehicles and a little band of half-starved prisoners plays its frivolous music. From the left hand side of the screen the powdery smoke emanating from the crematoriums drifts off and widens toward the sky.

INT: HOESS'S HOUSE - BACK HALL AND KITCHEN - AS SOPHIE ENTERS - DAY

The kitchen is warm and sunny and alive with happy domestic

activity. German pop music emanates from a radio upstairs. Frau Hoess is in the midst of preparations for a dinner party. There are more servants working in the kitchen than one would expect in a house of this size. They are prisoner servants but they are better dressed and healthier looking than the prisoners we have seen in the camp. One is preparing a ham, another is mixing a cake batter, and a gardener is unloading fresh vegetables and flowers from the garden. Frau Hoess is busy supervising all of them.

SS GUARD
This is the woman who will be doing stenographic work for Commandant Hoess.

Frau Hoess looks at her with disgust.

FRAU HOESS
You fool. Take her downstairs immediately, and make sure she showers thoroughly with special disinfectant soap. Take her clothes and burn them and give her some new clothes. Then bring her back to me. I don't understand how you could bring her into the kitchen this way, before she's disinfected.

She turns away from Sophie to one of the servants who is making a list for her. He is a small, subservient Polish prisoner, who seems to be in a favored position. When Frau Hoess is not looking, he looks at Sophie carefully. The minute Frau Hoess turns back to him, it is as if he has never been aware of Sophie's presence.

FRAU HOESS (contd)
(dictating list to Polish prisoner)
We will use the Hungarian wine tonight. I will need an extra supply of butter and eggs. I am afraid one cake may not be enough. And if it is possible, let us try for real coffee. And we will use the new silverware, the Dutch silverware, with the French tablecloth and napkins. The new one. I want everything to be pretty for the Reichfuhrer and all the others who work so hard. And in such ugliness.

Sophie is led downstairs by a prisoner-servant.

INT: BASEMENT - HOESS HOUSE

There are several straw pallets where the prisoner-servants sleep. It is damp, ill lit, and there is the feeling of rot and mold.

PRISONER-SERVANT
Give me your clothes. The shower is over there. Use the soap marked disinfectant. It will burn. And it smells. But if you don't use it, she will know.

Sophie takes off her clothes and gives them to the servant.

PRISONER-SERVANT (contd)
Your boots. Give me your boots.

SOPHIE
Please don't take them. They were a present from my father.

PRISONER-SERVANT
How did they let you keep them at the camp?

SOPHIE
I managed to hide them.

PRISONER-SERVANT
If she recognizes them, she'll take them anyway.

SOPHIE
I will clean and polish them. Please. They are all I have.

The servant is about to argue, but then shrugs and motions Sophie off to the shower. First she hides the shoes in a corner. The prisoner-servant disappears with her clothes. Sophie kneels and puts her hand inside one of the shoes, feeling inside the lining.

INT: SHOE - SOPHIE'S POV

Inside the boot, built into the lining, is a small slit-like compartment. The edge of a smudged and crumpled pamphlet peers through the lining. Sophie pushes it back so it can not be seen.

INT: SHOWER

Sophie washing with the disinfectant soap. A man's hand reaches inside the shower and turns it off. The hand is withdrawn.

MAN (VO)
(outside the shower)
Do not be afraid. Just listen to me. I must speak quickly.

SOPHIE
Who are you?

PRISONER (VO)
I am the prisoner in the kitchen who was writing down Frau Hoess's list.

SOPHIE
What do you want?

PRISONER (VO)
We have been told you can be of help to us.

SOPHIE
Help? Who can I help? I can not help myself. What fool told you I could be of help to anyone?

PRISONER (VO)
Wanda.

SOPHIE
She is here? In the camp?

PRISONER (VO)
She was arrested months ago. She says you must use the luck that got you here.

SOPHIE
How?

PRISONER (VO)
To help the Resistance.

SOPHIE
Resistance? In Auschwitz?

PRISONER (VO)
There is a network through the camp.

SOPHIE
What can I do?

PRISONER (VO)
Emmi, the little girl with the round face, has a portable radio. She keeps it in her bedroom on the third floor, right below Hoess's office in the attic where you will work. If you could get the radio, hide it in your smock, and bring it down here, I could smuggle it out.

SOPHIE
Why don't you do it yourself?

PRISONER (VO)
There is no reason for me to go upstairs. With you it would not matter.

SOPHIE
I give you the radio, you smuggle it to the Resistance in the camp, and I of course am killed for stealing it.

PRISONER (VO)
SS members by the dozen beat a path up to Hoess's office. Messengers, bearers of orders and memorandums and manifests, Rottenfuhrer and Untersherfuhrers from every corner of the camp. All of them would be suspected.

SOPHIE
I am a prisoner. I would be suspected first.

PRISONER (VO)
You must make him trust you.

SOPHIE
How?

PRISONER (VO)
He is a man. You are attractive.

SOPHIE
Bald, starving, stinking of her germicides? He will find <u>that</u> attractive?

PRISONER (VO)
You look German. You speak German, cultured German. You will work in the same room. You will be alone with him. And he is an unhappy man.

SOPHIE
It would take time.

PRISONER (VO)
He may be transferred soon. You can not wait too long.

SOPHIE
You say there is a network through the camp?

PRISONER (VO)
Yes.

SOPHIE
Then you must do something for me. You must find out about my son. His name is Jan. He's in the Children's Camp.

PRISONER (VO)
What is his number?

SOPHIE
1093467.

PRISONER (VO)
What do you want to know?

SOPHIE
If he is well. If he is ...

PRISONER (VO)
Alive.

SOPHIE
Yes.

PRISONER (VO)
We will try.

SOPHIE
I will only help you if you find this out for me. You understand? You must find my son.

PRISONER (VO)
I understand.

INT: BASEMENT

Sophie dressed in new clothes, is sitting on her pallet. She is lacing up her shoes. They have been cleaned within an inch of their life. She gives them one more polish with her hand. She rises and goes up the basement stairs. The "new" clothes she wears are hand-me-downs from the Hoess's. A bandana hides her bald head.

CLOSE SHOT - HER BOOTS - AS SHE CLIMBS THE STAIRS - SOPHIE'S POV

INT: KITCHEN

Sophie stands waiting for Frau Hoess's approval. From the staircase we hear the sound of pop music.

Frau Hoess is busy, tasting the soup the cook has prepared for lunch.

FRAU HOESS
(to the cook who is a prisoner)
Do you know this tastes exactly like the lentil soup my mother used to make?

THE COOK (A PRISONER)
My mother cooked it too.

Frau Hoess turns around and sees Sophie standing there.

FRAU HOESS
That is better.

She observes Sophie carefully.

SOPHIE - FRAU HOESS'S POV

CAMERA PANS down Sophie's body as Frau Hoess examines her. Just as the CAMERA is about to reach Sophie's boots, the cook speaks.

THE COOK
The soup is getting cold.

Frau Hoess goes to the back door and opens it.

FRAU HOESS
(shouting to the children)
You must come in for lunch.

She goes up to the staircase and shouts upstairs.

FRAU HOESS (contd)
Emmi, come down this minute.

PRISONER-SERVANT
(referring to Sophie)
Should I take her to the office?

FRAU HOESS
(distracted)
Yes. Yes. The Commandant has left instructions for her on his desk.

Sophie is taken out of the kitchen and up the stairs by the prisoner-servant assigned to her.

INT: HOESS HOUSE STAIRCASE

Sophie climbs the stairs. A young girl carrying a portable radio comes rushing down the stairs. As she passes Sophie, the little radio hits her side. The young girl does not apologize. She doesn't even recognize her presence.

INT: HOESS'S OFFICE

Sophie enters. We are in the attic of the house, beneath the sharply slanted roof. The room is whitewashed with aseptic brightness. It contains a plain table, a steel filing cabinet, some straight-backed chairs, and a cot. On the table is some official stationery in neat stacks, an orderly collection of pens and pencils, a big black typewriter, and a telephone. On top of the typewriter is a large piece of paper.

PAPER - SOPHIE'S POV

As she looks at it.

"TO NEW STENOGRAPHER: DICTATION IS ON DICTATING MACHINE. USE OFFICIAL STATIONERY."

Sophie sits down. She puts a fresh piece of paper in the typewriter. She looks out the little window in front of her.

SOPHIE'S POV THROUGH WINDOW

The other children have not yet come in for lunch. They are still playing Prisoner, chasing each other and tagging each other's arm bands in a grotesque game of tag. On the train platform in the distance, prisoners are now lined up next to the boxcars, as the SS men make the Selection. Already some are being taken away in the "Ambulances." Sophie turns on the dictating machine, puts the earphones in her ears, and starts to type. Hoess's voice is businesslike, impersonal, but when dealing with inefficiency, angry and impatient. The letter he is dictating is to a Polish Cement Contractor. Hoess complains bitterly about the delay in the delivery of cement that is necessary to complete the new crematorium. Hoess's voice and words are the voice and words of a responsible man under pressure having an agonizing time getting a decent building job done on schedule.

SOPHIE'S POV THROUGH WINDOW

Rudolph Hoess enters the yard below. He reacts to the badges on the arms of the children, takes them off, and chastizes them, though in a fairly goodnatured manner.

FRAU HOESS'S VOICE
Their soup is cold! But they insist on waiting for you.

He takes one of the children up in his arms for a moment, as if trying to make amends, and then he chases the others around the garden and into the house as they laugh delightedly. In counterpoint to the sight of this jovial family man, we continue to hear his tired, impatient voice dictating from

the machine. Sophie removes the earphones and listens to the sounds downstairs.

HOESS (VO)
(from downstairs)
Himmler can not stay for dinner. He had to return to Berlin.

FRAU HOESS (VO)
You don't think it's deliberate?

HOESS (VO)
(exasperated)
Why would it be deliberate?

FRAU HOESS (VO)
You said last night he was upset by the number of escapes and the delays with the building program.

HOESS (VO)
Enough.

FRAU HOESS (VO)
The new one is up there working. Would you believe that idiot Guard took her right into the kitchen directly from the camp without having her disinfected? In the kitchen! I mean, the children ...

HOESS (VO)
The children are the picture of health.

FRAU HOESS (VO)
That's because they're well fed here. What happens to them if we have to leave?

HOESS (VO)
They will have to sacrifice like other German children.

There is the sound of heavily booted footsteps coming up the stairs. Hoess enters in back of Sophie. We do not see his face. His uniformed body comes over to her and leans down as she takes the letter out of the typewriter and gives it to him. He sees her face only for the brief moment when she turns toward him to give him the letter. He seems to have no reaction to it. He reads over the letter, then leans over the desk to sign it. His body is next to hers. He hands her back the letter.

HOESS
I have another letter I want to dictate now.

He stops a moment, as if aware of her for the first time.

HOESS (contd)
You are Polish?

She nods.

HOESS (contd)
(casual, in passing)
You do not look like a Slav.

He begins to dictate.

CAMERA MOVES back to Sophie's hand as she writes. It is shaking.

INT: BASEMENT - NIGHT

Looking through small basement window, near the ceiling (SOPHIE'S POV). Red embers and flames from the crematorium give a strange pink glow to the night sky. We hear the sound of a dinner party from above.

A PRISONER (VO)
She's probably slicing the cake. Cutting through the cream and nuts and apples.

MEDIUM SHOT - SOPHIE LYING ON HER STRAW PALLET

The basement is dark. The only lighting is the reflection of the pink light from the window that moves across her face. All the prisoner-servants are lying on their pallets, but one can barely see them in the dark.

ANOTHER PRISONER (VO)
She certainly won't be living this well if he gets transferred.

ANOTHER PRISONER (VO)
I never thought I'd get that French silk dress to fit her. I'm good with a needle but I'm no magician.

ANOTHER PRISONER (VO)
(to Sophie)
Every time there's a new shipment of prisoners she sends Broneck to the warehouse to select any of their valuables he thinks might interest her. Furs, jewels, even toys for the children.

A dark figure comes toward Sophie's bed and leans over her. It is Broneck, the man we saw taking down Frau Hoess's lists in the kitchen.

BRONECK
(whispering to Sophie)
Your son is well.

SOPHIE
You've seen him?

BRONECK
It was Wanda. She said he is alive. But ...

SOPHIE
What? What?

BRONECK
It is unlikely he would survive the winter. You must try to get him out.

SOPHIE
How?

BRONECK
I am told your son could pass for an Aryan German. Hoess might be able to arrange for him to be put in Lebensborn. He would be sent to Germany and raised by Germans as a German. You probably would never see him again, but he would live. Hoess is the key.

SOPHIE
Does my son know I'm alive?

ANOTHER PRISONER (VO)
What are you whispering about with the new one?

Broneck gives her a slip of paper.

BRONECK
Remember. The radio.

He slides away from her, disappearing in the dark.

ANOTHER PRISONER (VO)
I wonder if they've eaten all the cake?

There is silence now, as the prisoners go to sleep or lose themselves in their thoughts. Sophie sits up on her pallet and opens the crumbled piece of paper Broneck gave her. She holds it close to the window to catch the light supplied by the furnaces of the crematoriums.

SOPHIE'S POV

On the crumbled piece of paper is a child's drawing. It is a picture of Sophie and a little boy drawing a picture and a little girl playing the flute. They are sitting in an idealized living room, by a cozy fire, looking very happy. Indeed it is a fantasy child drawing of a happy family. Sophie takes the paper and puts it inside her dress, and curls up on the bed, burying herself in the pillow.

INT: HOESS'S OFFICE - MEDIUM SHOT - DAY

Sophie is now sitting in a chair facing Hoess, taking his dictation. He paces back and forth in front of her, hands behind his back, standing stiff and straight in his uniform.

SOPHIE (VO)
Everything -- my son's life, and my own -- depended on Hoess. My life, my thoughts, became this man.

Hoess continues pacing as he dictates. The CAMERA MOVES closer and closer to them until Sophie's face fills the screen and he seems to walk back and forth across her face, at times obscuring it with the lower part of his body. At one point, he stops, and his groin is on a direct line with her face. She stares at it: The sex and body of this man that may be the key to her salvation.

INT: CELLAR - NIGHT

The prisoners are sleeping. There are the muffled sounds of men talking intermittently upstairs. And then, the far-off sound of a child practicing a flute. The CAMERA MOVES toward Sophie. She lies on her pallet, staring at the ceiling, as if paralyzed with terror by the sound. She gets up, puts her dress on and goes up the stairs.

INT: STAIRWAY

The sound of men's voices from the living room is sharper now. Sophie follows the sound of the flute as if drawn by a ghost. She is not sure it is real; she is not sure she is not going mad.

SECOND FLOOR LANDING

She stands outside a partially open bedroom door. The sound of the flute comes from inside. She goes up to the door and looks inside.

BEDROOM - THROUGH OPENING IN DOOR - SOPHIE'S POV

One of the daughters of the Hoess's is playing the flute.

She looks up and sees Sophie standing in the door, looking like a ghost.

IPHEGENIE
What are you doing here?

SOPHIE
There was some work I had forgotten.

IPHEGENIE
You frightened me.

SOPHIE
The flute. I heard the sound of the flute.

IPHEGENIE
I wanted an accordion for my birthday, but mother got me a flute.

Sophie stands there looking frozen.

IPHEGENIE (contd)
Do you play the flute?

In a quite friendly manner she reaches out to Sophie and hands her the flute.

IPHEGENIE (contd)
Would you like to play it?

Sophie looks down at the flute that is being offered to her.

SOPHIE
(leaving the room)
No. Thank you.

She starts to go down the stairs again, gets part way, and sits down, sliding onto the stair. From above, the sound of the flute begins again. Through the door directly across from where she is sitting, there is the sound of Hoess and another man talking.

HOESS (VO)
You are looking well.

OTHER MAN (VO)
I hardly drank, once I got away from here.

HOESS (VO)
You must not start again.

OTHER MAN (VO)
My father's words.

HOESS (VO)
Sometimes I think he should have let you be a priest.

OTHER MAN (VO)
My father asked me what kind of medicine I practiced here. Can you imagine! If he only knew. At last I do God's work. I select who shall live and who shall die. Is that not God's work?

CAMERA MOVES from Sophie into the living room. Hoess is sitting by the fire, drinking his schnapps, talking to a young man in the uniform of an SS Officer. He is very "Nordic" looking. Attractive in a thin-lipped austere, unbending way. He looks a bit like a militarized Leslie Howard. The CAMERA CONTINUES MOVING into the living room, closer and closer to the SS Doctor. By the end of the scene, the SS Doctor's haunted face fills the screen.

HOESS
Every Jew killed strengthens the future of our country. They are the enemies of our race.

SS DOCTOR
As are the Poles, the Slavs, the Russians.

HOESS
You are not old enough to remember what the world did to Germany in defeat. Germany can not afford to be kind if it is to survive.

SS DOCTOR
It is the children I find most difficult.

CAMERA HOLDS on the SS Doctor's haunted face.

SS DOCTOR (contd)
There is another epidemic in the Children's Camp. It doesn't matter what we do.

CLOSE SHOT - SOPHIE

On the staircase listening in horror.

SS DOCTOR (VO)
They die like flies.

HOESS (VO)
You can not afford to be so sensitive.

CAMERA HOLDS on the SS Doctor's haunted face.

INT: HOESS'S OFFICE - DAY

CLOSE SHOT Sophie as she types. Taking Hoess's dictation. Her face has no expression on it.

HOESS (VO)
To Reichfuhrer Himmler, S.S. Headquarters, Berlin. I have given careful thought to the possible reasons such a large percentage of Greek Jews who were delivered here have been unfit for work. Bad nutrition at the point of origin, the extreme length of the journey and lastly a trait of character. Ratlosigkeit, common to people of Southern climes and therefore to those of weak moral fiber, which simply causes them to fail to withstand the shock of being uprooted.
(politely)
Am I speaking too fast for you?

SOPHIE
Nein, mein Kommandant.

There is a timid knock on the door. He goes over to it and opens it. Frau Hoess is standing at the door. Her eyes are swollen with weeping.

FRAU HOESS
I do not want to bother you, but I thought maybe, maybe if you went to Berlin and explained to Himmler how unfair this order is, maybe he would change his mind. What can you lose by it?

Hoess goes to the other side of the door and partially shuts it. But Sophie can hear his whispering.

HOESS
Do you expect me to beg to stay here?

FRAU HOESS
Then it is final.

She starts to cry.

HOESS
There is no appealing the orders I received this morning. We are being transferred out of here and that is the end of it.

She starts to cry again. He walks back inside the room and shuts the door. He seems very disturbed. He goes over to his desk and starts to open more of his mail.

HOESS (contd)
(reading a letter, his face flushed with anger)
They know it's compulsory that they write in German, these blasted people. But they consistently break the rules! Damn them to hell these Polish halfwits!

He hands her the letter.

HOESS (contd)
What does it say?

At that instant Sophie sees a fearful headache attack Hoess with prodigious speed.

HOESS (contd)
My pills, for God's sake, where are my pills!

Sophie goes swiftly to the chair next to Hoess's cot upon which he keeps the bottle of ergotamine he uses to alleviate these attacks. She pours out a glass of water from a carafe and hands it and two tablets of ergotamine to the Commandant, who gulps the medicine down. Then with a groan, his hand clapped to his brow, he sinks down on the cot.

SOPHIE
Shall I call the doctor? The last time I remember he said to you ...

HOESS
Just be quiet, I can't bear anything now.

He rolls over on his flank and lies there rigid and motionless except for the rise and fall of his chest beneath his shirt. She goes to work: she commences typing. When she turns her eyes in his direction she realizes with a curious mixture of hope and apprehension that he must have been eyeing her for many minutes from the cot where he lies. He beckons to her and she rises and goes to his side.

HOESS (contd)
(in a subdued voice)
It's better. That ergotamine is a miracle.

SOPHIE
I'm glad, mein Kommandant.

HOESS
How did you come here? Not many prisoners are so fortunate as to find a stenographic billet. You may sit down.

She notices that he is still sweating desperately. Supine now, eyes half closed, he lies rigid and wet in a pool of sunlight.

SOPHIE
(seating herself)
I think it must have been a stroke of fate.
(a pause as she makes her decision)
Fate brought me to you, because I knew only you would understand.

HOESS
Understand what?

SOPHIE
That a mistake has been made.

She hesitates, tumultuously agitated.

SOPHIE (contd)
My family were passionate German partisans, for many years in the vanguard of those countless lovers of the Third Reich who admire National Socialism and the principles of the Fuhrer. My father was to the depths of his soul Juden-feindlich ...

HOESS
(with a small groan)
Judenfeindlich, Judenfeindlich.
(with a hoarse sigh)
Jews. Jews! Will I ever be done with Jews!

He reaches into the pocket of his jacket, draped over the other chair at the side of the cot, and takes from it a tinfoil-wrapped chocolate bar.

Stripping the foil from the chocolate, he extends the bar toward her. Hesitant at the outset, surprised ... she nervously breaks off a piece and pops it into her mouth, knowing that she betrays a greedy eagerness in the midst of her effort to be casual.

And then, to her amazement, he reaches up with his free hand and plucks a little something from the edge of her upper lip; it is, she realizes, a crumb of the chocolate she had eaten, now held between his thumb and forefinger, and she watches as he moves his tar stained fingers slowly toward his lips and deposits the tiny chestnut-brown flake into his mouth.

HOESS
What's the matter? You're white.

SOPHIE
Nothing, mein Kommandant.

Hoess rolls himself off the cot, standing abruptly erect and walking the few paces to the window.

HOESS
Those people in Berlin. If they just understood the magnitude, the complexity! These Jews, they come on and on from all the countries in Europe, countless thousands, millions, like the herring in the spring that swarm into Mecklenberg Bay. I never dreamed the earth contained so many of das Erwahlte Volk (The Chosen People).

Sophie rises from her chair and draws near to him. She bends down and fumblingly plucks the worn and faded pamphlet of her father's from the little crevice in her boot.

SOPHIE
(flourishing it in front of him, spreading out the title page)
This is one of the earliest Polish documents suggesting a "final solution" to the Jewish problem. I collaborated with my father in writing it. I do earnestly beg you at least to consider it. Perhaps you could begin to see the entire injustice of my imprisonment here ...

He gives her a look of absolute concentrated penetration as he takes the pamphlet from between her fingers.

HOESS
You maintain, then, that you are innocent.

SOPHIE
Sir, I freely admit my guilt of the minor charge which caused me to be sent here ... I am only asking that this misdemeanor be weighed against my record not only as a Polish sympathizer with National Socialism but as an active and involved campaigner in the sacred war against Jews and Jewry. That pamphlet in your hand, mein Kommandant, will prove my point. I implore you ... you who have the power to give clemency and freedom ... to reconsider my imprisonment in the light of my past good works, and to return me to my life in Warsaw.

Hoess gives the pamphlet a flat little tap with his fingertips.

HOESS
You seem to forget that you are a Pole, and therefore an enemy of the Reich who would remain an enemy even if you were not also judged guilty of a criminal act.

Sophie bursts into tears. The tears spill forth and she thrusts her face into her hands. All ... all ... has failed. She is finished.

She hears the attic door closed upon a squeak of hinges, slowly, gradually, as if by some reluctant force. She is conscious of his boots as he returns toward her, then his fingers grasping her shoulder firmly even before she allows herself to draw her hands away from her eyes and to look up. She forces herself to stop crying. The clamor beyond the intervening door is muffled.

HOESS (contd)
(in an unsteady voice)
You've been flirting shamelessly with me.

Hoess's eyes are distraught; they give her the impression somewhat that he is about to strike her. But then with a great visceral heave he seems to retain possession of himself, his gaze becomes normal. His clutch on her shoulder is hurting her. He makes a nervous choking sound.

HOESS (contd)
(relaxing his grip)
It's hard to believe you're Polish, with your superb German and the way you look ... the fair complexion of your skin and the lines of your face, so typically Aryan. And yet you are what you say you are ... a Pole. I don't like flirts. I have always detested this quality in women, this crude use of sex to try and seek out a few rewards. And yet ... and yet it can't be all your fault, you're an extremely attractive woman.

We hear the camp's symphonic death sounds: of metal clangor, of the boxcars remote colliding booms and the faint keening of a locomotive whistle, mournful and shrill.

HOESS (contd)
There is something about the pure and radiant beauty of a certain kind of Aryan woman ... fair of skin and of hair that inspires me to idolize that beauty.

He yanks her body up against his own. She has a sense of elbows, knees and a scratchy cheese-grater of stubble. He is awkward and his arms around her seem multitudinous, like those of a huge mechanical fly. She holds her breath while his hands at her back try out some sort of massage. And his heart ... his rampaging galloping heart! Trembling like a very sick man, he gives nothing so bold as a kiss, although she senses some protuberance ... his tongue or nose ... mooning restlessly around her bekerchiefed ear. An abrupt knock at the door causes him to break apart from her swiftly.

HOESS (contd)
(soft, miserable)
Scheiss!

He opens the door. His adjutant Scheffler stands again in the doorway.

SCHEFFLER
Begging the Commandant's pardon, but Frau Hoess has a question for the Commandant. Since she has just recovered from a week-long case of die Grippe, Madam wishes to find out whether in the Commandant's judgement, Iphegenie is well enough to accompany her to a matinee. Or should she consult Dr. Schmidt?

HOESS
Tell Frau Hoess, that if she thinks the child is well enough to accompany her to a matinee then I would expect she's well enough to accompany her to a matinee.

The Aide retreats down the stairs. Hoess turns back toward Sophie and walks back to her.

HOESS (contd)
I would risk a great deal to have relations with you.

He seems about to touch or grab her again, but he doesn't.

HOESS (contd)
If I were not leaving here I would take the risk. But they have got rid of me, and I must go. And so you must go too. I am sending you back to Block Three where you came from. You will go tomorrow.

SOPHIE
(reaching for the right words to say)
Herr Kommandant, I know I can't ask much
(MORE)

SOPHIE (contd)
for myself and you must act according to the rules. But I beg you to do one thing for me before you send me back. I have a young son in Camp D where all the other boys are prisoners. His name is Jan Zawistowski, age ten. I have not seen him since six months. I am afraid for his health. I beg of you to consider some way in which he might be released. His health is frail and he is so very young.

Hoess turns toward her and looks straight at her without blinking. She reaches out and touches his shirt, then clutches at it.

SOPHIE (contd)
Please, if you have been impressed only the slightest bit by my presence, by my being, I beg you to do this for me. Not to release me, just to release my little boy. Please do this for me.

He grabs her wrist and pulls her hand away from his shirt.

HOESS
You think you could get me to contravene proper authority because I expressed some little affection?
(pause)
I find this disgusting!

She throws herself against him, throws her arms around his waist.

SOPHIE
(begging)
Please! Please! Please!

Hoess's muscles are stiff with trembling. It is obvious he is finished with her.

SOPHIE (contd)
(unable to stop)
Then at least let me see my little boy, let me visit him, let me see him just once, please do that one thing for me. Can't you understand this? You have children of your own. Just allow me to see him, to hold him once in my arms.

She falls on her knees in front of him ... and presses her face against his boots.

SOPHIE (VO)
I surrounded Hoess's boots with my arms. I pressed my cheek up against those cold leather boots as if they were made of fur or something warm and comforting. I think maybe I even licked them with my tongue, licked those Nazi boots.

INT: HOESS'S OFFICE - 1942

HOESS
Get to your feet! Demonstrations like this offend me.

Sophie begins to rise.

HOESS (contd)
(his voice softer)
Certainly you may see your son, Sophie.

INT: STAIRCASE

Sophie descending. On the landing below she looks into the bedroom from which the little girl had emerged with the portable radio. She looks in the room and catches sight of the radio through the open door. She stands in the shadows of the hallway, only a few feet from the bottom of the attic stairs.

SOPHIE (VO)
I told myself I dare not take the radio now when there was some hope that I might see my son. But I also knew this might be the last chance I would have.

She starts to move into the room, then hesitates.

SOPHIE (VO contd)
Perhaps the God I worshipped as a child was still alive in me, the God who rewarded noble acts. I tried to make a pact with him: I would steal the radio for the Underground if He would save my son.

She moves, heart rampaging, not shedding the fear that clings to her like an evil companion as she sidles her way into the room. She has to walk only a few paces, but even as she does so, she senses something wrong, a ghastly error in tactics and timing: she places her hand on the cool plastic surface of the radio.

EMMI (VO)
(cool and didactic)
Your business may take you up and down
(MORE)

EMMI (VO contd)
the hallway but you have no business in this room.

Sophie whirls and beholds Emmi. The girl is standing at the closet door. She is clad in pale blue rayon panties; her precocious eleven-year-old breasts bulge in a bra of the same washed out shade. Her face is very white and astonishingly round, like an underdone biscuit, crowned by a fringe of frizzy yellow hair; her features are both handsome and degenerate; trapped within that spherical frame, the puffed prettiness of nose, mouth and eyes appear to be painted on ... at first like on a doll, then as if on a balloon.

SOPHIE
I'm sorry, gnadige Fraulein, I was only ...

EMMI
Don't try to explain. You came in here to steal that radio. I saw you. I saw you almost pick it up.

With an aplomb that belies the fact of her near nudity, she slowly reaches into her closet and draws on a robe of white terry cloth. She turns.

EMMI (contd)
(with bland matter-of-factness)
I'm going to report you to my father. He will have you punished.

SOPHIE
I was only going to look at it! I swear it! I've passed by here so many times. I've never seen a radio so ... so small. So ... so cunning. I couldn't believe it really worked. I just wanted to see ...

EMMI
You're a liar. You were going to steal it. I could tell by the look on your face.

SOPHIE
You must believe me. I wouldn't want to take your ...

EMMI
You would want to take it, it cost seventy Deutschmarks. You could listen to music on it, down in the cellar. You're a dirty Pollack. My mother says that Pollacks are worse thieves than Gypsies and dirtier, too.

The nose puckers in the circular face.

EMMI (contd)
You smell!

Sophie senses darkness surging at the back of her eyes. She groans. She faints, and all goes into darkness. There is a *shrieking sound in the blackness. The blackness turns to a* huge CLOSE UP of the child's moon face, hovering directly over her.

EMMI (contd)
Wake up.

Sophie is lying flat and supine on the floor while the girl crouches next to her, flourishing a phial of ammonia beneath her nose. The casement window has been flung open, letting the frosty wind fill the room. The shriek in her ears has been the camp whistle; she hears its distant voice now, decrescendo. At eye level, next to Emmi's bare knee, is a small plastic medical kit embellished with a green cross.

EMMI (contd)
You fainted. Keep your head horizontal for a minute so it will get the flow of blood. Sniff deeply. That cold air will revive you.

Sophie groans and stirs.

EMMI (contd)
You must keep still! I have a certificate in first aid ... junior grade, first class. Do as I say, do you understand?

She smartly slaps Sophie's cheeks.

EMMI (contd)
The first aid manual states that smart smacks may help reviving a victim of die Synkope.

She continues slapping Sophie's cheeks with precision and efficiency worthy of an SS officer.

EMMI
(stopping)
Sit erect and lean against the bed.

Sophie does this. She gazes toward the ceiling now through pupils gradually shrinking back to their normal focus.

SOPHIE'S POV

Emmi, now standing up and regarding her with an expression resembling benignness or at least a certain tolerant curiosity.

EMMI
I will say one thing, you're very pretty. My mother said you must be Swedish.

SOPHIE
(in a gently solicitous voice)
Tell me, tell me, what's that design sewn onto your robe? It's so attractive.

EMMI
It's the insignia of amy swimming championship. I was the champion in my class. I was only eight.

SOPHIE
Where was that, Emmi?

EMMI
At Dachau. We had a wonderful pool for the garrison children. It was even heated. Let me show you my scrapbook.

She pounces into her dresser drawer and fills the crook of one arm with a huge album that spills out photographs and clippings. She lugs it to Sophie's side, pausing only to switch on the radio. Cracklings and peeps disturb the air. She makes an adjustment, and the static vanishes, replaced by a far faint chorus of horns and trumpets, exultant, victorious, Handelian. The girl comes back to her with the album, and leafs through it.

EMMI (contd)
(pointing to pictures of herself)
This is me. This is me. This is me ... And this is me ... I also began to learn diving. Look, here, this is me.

Sophie looks away from the pictures toward the window. There is a greater onset of smoke, outlined by a faint glow of firelight, in the evening sky. Her nostrils quiver, and there is a look of nausea on her face, as the smell of burning bodies drifts through the window.

An abrupt voice on the radio interrupts the choir of brass.

RADIO VOICE
Ici Londres! L'Italie a declare qu'un etat de guerre existe contre l'Allemagne.

Emmi goes to the window to close out either the cold or the pestilential air, or both.

EMMI
(turning back to Sophie)
That stink is of Jews burning. But I guess you know that. It's forbidden to ever speak of it in this house, but you ... you're just a prisoner.

CELLAR WINDOW - SOPHIE'S POV - NIGHT

The embers and flames from the crematoriums lighting up the sky.

SOPHIE (VO)
That night I kept repeating to myself: tomorrow I will see my child.

Sophie lying in bed, staring at the window. The sound of Iphegenie practicing the flute comes from upstairs. Sophie reaches under her pillow and clutches Jan's crumpled drawing.

SOPHIE (VO contd)
It was all that kept me sane.

INT: WAITING ROOM OUTSIDE HOESS'S OFFICE - DAY

Door of Hoess's office opens; his adjutant comes out and walks past Sophie, who is waiting to see her son. He shuts the door behind him. Sophie goes up to the door and knocks, tentatively.

SOPHIE
Mein Commandant, I am here to see my son.

HOESS (VO)
Come in.

INT: HOESS'S OFFICE - DAY

Sophie opens the door and looks around the room for her child. Hoess sits there alone.

HOESS
Last night after you were gone I realized that I couldn't bring your child here. It would compromise my position.

Sophie stands there, disbelieving, and then, not even knowing what she is doing, she attacks him. She is totally out of control. She scrapes his cheek with her fingernails, and starts hitting out at him.

SOPHIE
(attacking him)
Gas me, then! Gas me like you gassed my little girl! You filthy murdering bastard.

He finally controls her, forcibly, but without anger. He places her in a chair. He wipes a little blood away from his cheek with his handkerchief. He puts his hand on her shoulder.

HOESS
I'm sorry. I will try to make it up to you. What is there that I can do?

Sophie's attitude changes. She makes a deliberate effort to calm herself.

SOPHIE
Lebensborn. You could have my child moved away from the Children's Camp and into your program of Lebensborn. You could have him sent to the Reich, where he would become a good German. Already he is blond and looks German and speaks perfect German like I do. There are not many Polish children like that. Don't you see how my little boy Jan would be excellent for Lebensborn?

HOESS
I will look into the matter.

SOPHIE
No, you've got to give me a more definite answer than that.

HOESS
(after a moment)
Alright, I will see that he is removed from the camp.

SOPHIE
How will I know? How will I know for certain that he has been taken away from here? Also, you must promise me this, you must promise to let me know where he has been taken in Germany so that some day when the war is over I will be able to see him again.

HOESS
(after another pause)
I promise that the child will be removed from the camp and you will hear of his whereabouts from time to time.

SOPHIE
How can I be sure of this? You said yesterday that you would let me see Jan today.

HOESS
You will have a message from me from time to time. You have my assurance and my word as a German officer, my word of honor.

SOPHIE
Danke, mein Kommandant, for helping me.

HOESS
Go now.

She turns and starts to go. She opens the door. There is the sound of operetta music from below.

HOESS (contd)
(listening to the music)
Lehar. My favorite composer. Do you know what the music is?

SOPHIE
It is the overture of his operetta ...

HOESS
(interrupting)
Yes, yes. The Land of Smiles.

He gives a self-satisfied smile.

She leaves, shutting the door; the CAMERA HOLDS on the image of Hoess, standing there, looking after her.

INT: STAIRCASE HOESS HOUSE - DAY

Sophie descends the stairs. She stops at Emmi's room. She looks in the room. There is no one there, but the radio is playing.

SOPHIE (VO)
I walked downstairs past Emmi's room and there was the little radio playing again. I could have taken it easily. But I knew that this time they would suspect me first. I left the radio there and was suddenly filled with a terrible hatred for myself.

HOLD CLOSE on the radio and its happy music.

EXT: AUSCHWITZ

The same street that we saw Sophie walk down with the guard on her way to Hoess's. She is walking with a prison guard again, except this time her back is to us; she is walking back into the camp. There are still the hands reaching out through the bars of the windows of Block II. There is still the Crematorium smoke rising from Crematorium II. The only

difference is there is a body hanging from a public gallows in the BG.

SOPHIE (VO)
He did not keep his word. I never saw my little boy again. Hoess left Auschwitz and I went back to the camp. Months later I heard through a Resistance member that Jan was gone from Children's Camp. For a short time this filled me with joy until I realized that it might mean only that Jan was dead. Not sent to Lebensborn, but dead of disease or just the winter cold. You know, Stingo, I never knew what happened to my little boy.

CAMERA MOVES with Sophie up the mud filled street, PAST the reaching hands in Block II. As IT COMES CLOSE to the figure hanging from the gallows, directly over the street, it stops. It is Wanda's body.

SOPHIE (VO)
Wanda was killed for her Resistance activity. They tortured her, then they hung her on a hook and made her slowly strangle to death. She was the bravest person I ever knew.

CLOSE SHOT - SOPHIE

Looking up at her old friend's body.

SOPHIE (VO)
Wanda once said that such a terrible place was this Auschwitz, so terrible beyond all belief, it turned people into sick animals.

PROSPECT PARK - BROOKLYN - 1947 - NIGHT

Sophie looking at the past.

SOPHIE
I know the Nazis turned me into a sick animal and I should not feel so much guilt over all the things I done there. And that I am still alive.
(she looks at Stingo)
But this guilt is something I can not get rid of and I think I never will.

CLOSE SHOT - STINGO

It is as if he is reaching for something to say to comfort her, to obliterate the pain.

CLOSE SHOT - SOPHIE

SOPHIE
So maybe now you see why I did not want to be alive no more. Til Nathan brought me back to life. He make me live for him.

Stingo reaches over, takes her in his arms, and holds her, not in the awkward, self-conscious manner we have seen before, but with the protective strength of all his love for her.

STINGO
Sophie, live for me.

SOPHIE
(as she looks up at his anguished face)
My poor Stingo. What have we done to you?

FADE OUT.

INT: HALLWAY - YETTA'S - THE FOLLOWING MORNING

Stingo bounds out of his room and up the stairs.

STINGO
(knocking on Sophie's door)
Rise and shine, Miss Sophie. You just rise and shine. Old Uncle Stingo is taking you to the beach.

SOPHIE (VO)
I can't Stingo. I have to finish moving.

STINGO
You can not move and leave your wonderful neighbor down below abandoned, desperate, unable to write. When my book is finished, you can move. And I must warn you it may turn out to be the longest novel ever written.

EXT: CONEY ISLAND BEACH

Stingo and Sophie placing their blanket and picnic on the beach. Stingo takes Sophie and runs with her toward the water.

EXT: OCEAN

Sophie hesitates as they hit the cold water.

Stingo dives in the water and swims back to Sophie who is standing in the water, clutching herself for warmth.

STINGO
Come on. The water's wonderful. It's just that first second.

Stingo starts to run after her in the water.

SOPHIE
(laughing)
Don't.

STINGO
I'm going to show no mercy.

He starts to pull at her arm and she pulls away, still laughing. As she resists being pulled into the water by him, a wave hits both of them, and splashes right over them, pulling them both down in the water. The wave passes and they both bob up in each other's arms.

STINGO (contd)
(unexpectedly holding her in the water)
I gave you fair warning.

They are both kneeling in the water; holding onto each other.

Suddenly he looks very serious and he kisses her passionately. Another wave breaks over them but he holds onto her, never taking his lips from hers.

SOPHIE
Oh, Stingo, tu es raide.

He kisses her again, and then suddenly is engulfed by a spasm and draws away. He looks dismayed.

SOPHIE (contd)
So quick? So fast? We barely kissed and you have come?

Another wave splashes over them. This time they come up separately. He does not reach toward her. But she goes to him and takes him in her arms.

SOPHIE (contd)
Stingo, Stingo, it is alright, my darling. It's not the end of the world. It happens. Especially if you are a virgin.

STINGO
(with a wretched sigh)
How did you know I was a virgin?

SOPHIE
I was right, no?

STINGO
(groaning)
Yes, pure as the driven snow.

She holds him in the water, embracing him.

SOPHIE
Do not worry so. It is a condition that has a very simple cure.

STINGO
I thought that too, once.

SOPHIE
I do adore you.

EXT: BROOKLYN STREET

Sophie and Stingo walk, sunburned and smiling in the evening twilight, looking like young lovers.

STINGO
Oh Sophie, come South with me. Let me show you the land I grew up in.

SOPHIE
(teasing him)
What will your Southern daddy think of you travelling with an old Polish lady like me?

STINGO
He will adore my old Polish lady the way I do.

As they get closer to the boarding house, we hear the sound of joyful music. It is as if the music is celebrating their happy mood. It is the Haydn piece that Nathan loves so much. Sophie stops.

SOPHIE
(half afraid to believe)
Listen, Stingo. It must be Nathan.

She pulls away from Stingo and runs toward the sound of the music. Stingo watches her, for a moment, feeling the abandoned lover.

INT: PINK PALACE - STAIRCASE

Stingo climbs the stairs to Sophie's room and looks inside.

STINGO'S POV - SOPHIE'S ROOM

There is Nathan on his knees, his head buried in Sophie's body. There is a look of ecstasy upon her face.

Nathan remains motionless, frozen in an attitude of devotion, or fealty, or penance, or supplication ... or all of these.

INT: STINGO'S ROOM - MORNING

Stingo getting out of bed. As he gets up, he sees an envelope being slipped under his door. He goes over to the door and opens it. No one is there. He takes the envelope and goes over to his desk. He looks out the window and sees Nathan walking away. Stingo opens the envelope.

INSERT - ENVELOPE

As he opens it revealing a check for two-hundred dollars and a note from Nathan: "To the greater glory of Southern Literature."

NARRATOR (VO)
My funds had been shrinking. Indeed, before Nathan had left, I had mentioned I might have to put the book away for a while to earn some money. In 1947, to a person in my state of virtual destitution, such a sum can only be described as, well, imperial. I was flabbergasted.

Stingo puts the check back into the envelope. On the envelope he scribbles: "Thanks, but my various religious and ancestral scruples forbid me from accepting such a generous gift. But the greater glory of Southern Literature is grateful for the attempt."

Stingo goes upstairs and slips the envelope underneath Sophie's door.

DISSOLVE:

INT: STINGO'S ROOM - EARLY EVENING

Stingo is at his desk, writing. The envelope comes sailing onto his desk. He looks up at the open window in front of him. There stands Nathan, his head half in the window.

NATHAN
Don't you know that an artist can not live according to petty bourgeois financial virtues?

STINGO
You just don't understand my Southern upbringing.

NATHAN
Look, Stingo, don't you understand that it's my dream to be able to write a book as good as that. For two hundred bucks I can buy a little part of that dream. Don't be mean to me. Let me have my little bargain.

STINGO
What about interest? It's only fair that you get interest.

NATHAN
No more talk about MONEY. It's not good for your soul.

Nathan makes a graceful, athletic leap over the window sill and into Stingo's room.

NATHAN (contd)
I only ask one thing in my new and honored role as patron of the arts.
(suddenly shy)
Would you trust me to keep reading your work?

Stingo seems hesitant, and embarrassed at his hesitancy.

NARRATOR (VO)
A still, small, mean-spirited voice at the back of my mind told me that his largess was Nathan's way of atoning for the attack he had made on my book when he had so cruelly banished Sophie and me from his existence. I knew now it was a drug induced derangement which had caused him to say those hatefully irresponsible things ... words it was now clear he no longer remembered. Words which were as lost to his recollection as his own loony, destructive behavior.

During the narration Stingo has been gathering his manuscript together. He hands it to Nathan.

STINGO
Things have been going pretty slowly lately. But sure, you can read what I've got ... Patron.

CAMERA HOLDS on Stingo as Nathan gives him a bear hug and leaves the room.

NARRATOR (VO)
Nathan had reentered our lives, bringing to us the same high spirits, generosity, energy, fun, magic and love Sophie and I had thought were gone for good.

EXT: PORCH - OUTSIDE SOPHIE'S ROOM - LATER THAT EVENING

Sophie and Stingo sit out on the porch listening to Beethoven's Fourth Symphony; through the window, WE SEE Nathan in the room,

reading Stingo's manuscript. He finishes the pages, comes out and hands them to Stingo.

NATHAN
(smiling, handing Stingo the pages)
Maybe I should go down South, see what it's like. This stuff of yours whets my appetite.

STINGO
God, yes! We could start in Washington and head on down. We could visit all the northern Virginia battlefields. Manassas, Fredericksburg, the Wilderness, Spotsylvania ... the whole works.

NATHAN
I'm due a vacation from the lab in mid-October. Why don't we plan for then?

STINGO
Fantastic!

Nathan puts his arm around Sophie and gives her an enormous squeeze. He glances up into Sophie's face. The look of love they exchange is so embarrassingly intimate that Stingo turns away.

NATHAN
(to Sophie)
Shall I tell him?

SOPHIE
Stingo's our best friend, isn't he?

NATHAN
And also our best man, I hope. We're going to get married in October! So this trip will also be our honeymoon.

STINGO
God Almighty! Congratulations!

Stingo strides over to the chair and kisses them both. Sophie next to her ear, and Nathan on his noble blade of a nose.

STINGO (contd)
That's perfectly wonderful.

INT: HALLWAY - YETTA ZIMMERMAN'S - DAY
CLOSE UP - MORRIS FINK - HOLDING WALL TELEPHONE IN HIS HAND

MORRIS FINK
(shouting)
Stingo! Telephone!

Stingo comes out of his room and takes the phone from Morris.

MORRIS FINK (contd)
Some little girlie on the phone.

STINGO
(into the phone)
Hello ...

WOMAN'S VOICE
One moment. The doctor will talk to you.

STINGO
I beg your pardon.

There is a click and a brief moment before the phone is picked up by someone else.

MAN'S VOICE
Hello, this is Larry.
(the voice is warm and likable, almost like Nathan's)
I'm Nathan's brother.

STINGO
Oh, Larry! I mean ... of course.

DOCTOR
Nathan has talked about you a good deal. I know you're good friends.

STINGO
Yes.

DOCTOR
I wonder if it would be possible for us to arrange a meeting.

STINGO
I'd be happy to meet you, Doctor. Any time.

DOCTOR
Would you mind paying me a visit at my home in Forest Hills?

EXT: LARGE MIDDLE CLASS APARTMENT HOUSE IN A RATHER FASHIONABLE NEIGHBORHOOD iIN FOREST HILLS - STINGO ENTERING

INT: APARTMENT HOUSE - CORRIDOR - STINGO AT APARTMENT DOOR ... BUZZING

The door opens revealing Larry, Nathan's brother. He is older, but resembles his brother in an arresting way; yet the difference between the two is quickly apparent, for where Nathan is all nervous energy, volatile, unpredictable, Larry is calm and soft-spoken, with a reassuring manner.

DOCTOR
You must be Stingo.

Stingo walks into the apartment.

INT: LARRY'S APARTMENT - LARGE AND COMFORTABLE

LARRY
Would you like a bottle of Molson's Canadian ale? Nathan tells me that you are a connoisseur of malt beverages.

The ale is readily at hand on a tray on a table, and Larry pours it for Stingo and hands it to him. They sit down on chairs by a spacious open window overlooking a complex of pleasant ivy-covered Tudor buildings.

LARRY (contd)
I need not tell you that Nathan regards you highly. I think it might give you a charge to know that he not only thinks you're writing a swell novel, but thinks the world of you as a ... well, as a guy.

Stingo nods, coughing up something noncommittal, and shows a flush of pleasure.

STINGO
It's really remarkable, you know, to find a scientist who gives a damn about literature much less has this enormous comprehension of literary values. I mean, here he is ... a first-rate biologist in a huge company like Pfizer ...

LARRY
(gently)
Excuse me Stingo ... I hope I can call you that ... excuse me, but Nathan is not a research biologist. He is not a bona-fide scientist, and he has no degree of any kind. All that is a simple fabrication.

STINGO
But I don't understand, do you mean ...

LARRY
I mean that this biologist business is my brother's masquerade ... Oh, he does report into Pfizer each day. He does have a job in the company library, an undemanding sinecure where he can do a lot of reading without bothering anyone, and occasionally he does a little research for one of the legitimate biologists on the staff. It keeps him out of harm's way. No one knows about it, least of all that sweet girl of his, Sophie.

STINGO
(struggling for words)
But now ...

LARRY
One of the chief officials of the company is a close friend of our father's. Just a very nice favor. And when Nathan's in control of himself he apparently does a good job at the little he is required to do. After all, as you well know, Nathan is boundlessly bright, maybe a genius.

Larry gives again his wan, pained smile and presses the palms of his hands silently together.

LARRY (contd)
But the truth is that my brother's quite mad.

STINGO
Oh Christ.

LARRY
Paranoid schizophrenic, or so the diagnosis goes. One of those conditions where weeks, months, even years will go by without a manifestation and then ... pow! ... he's off. What's aggravated the situation horribly in these recent months is these drugs he's been getting.

STINGO
(stammering, grasping at scraps, straws)
But it's so hard to believe. When he told me about Harvard ...

LARRY
Oh, Nathan never went to college. Not that he wasn't more than capable mentally, of course. On his own he's read more books already than I ever will in my lifetime. But when one is as sick as Nathan has been one simply cannot find the continuity to get a formal education. His real schools have been expensive funny farms.

STINGO
Oh, it's so goddamned sad and awful. I knew he was ...
(he hesitates)

LARRY
You mean you have known that he was not normal.

STINGO
Yes. I guess any fool could tell that. But I just didn't know how ... well, how serious it was.

LARRY
Once there was a time ... a period of about two years when he was in his late teens ... when it looked as if he were going to be completely well. One night after a furious argument Nathan took it into his head to try to burn the house down, and he almost did. That was when we had to put him away for a long period. It was the first time ... but not the last.

A lovely dark-haired woman of about thirty enters the room, walks to Larry's side and touches his shoulder.

WOMAN
I'm going out for a minute darling.

Stingo rises.

LARRY
Sweetheart, this is Nathan's friend, Stingo. This is my wife, Mimi, Stingo.

MIMI
(taking his hand)
I'm so glad to meet you. He's talked about you so often that somehow I feel you're a younger brother.

STINGO
He's been like a brother to me.

MIMI
I'm going to leave you two alone to talk. I hope I'll see you again.

She departs, moving with easy undulant grace across the thick carpet of the room ... which for the first time Stingo perceives in all of its paneled, hospitably warm, book-lined unostentatious luxury.

LARRY
For all these last years it's been in and out of Payne-Whitney or Riggs or Menninger or whatever, with these long periods of relative tranquility when Nathan acts as normally as you or I. When we got him this little job at the Pfizer library we thought it might be a time when he had undergone a permanent remission. But now there's this sweet, sad, beautiful, fouled-up Polish girl of his. Poor kid. He's told me me they're going to get married ... and what do you, Stingo, think of that?

STINGO
He can't get married, can he, when he's like this?

LARRY
Hardly.
(pause)
But how can one prevent him, either? How can you penalize a man and prevent him from living a life like everyone else by simply assuming the worst, assuming that he will go completely berserk again, when such might not be the case? And yet suppose he marries that nice girl and suppose they have a baby. Then suppose he really goes off his rocker again. How unfair that would be to ... well, to everyone!

He gazes at Stingo with a penetrating look.

LARRY (contd)
I don't have any answer.

STINGO
What is it that you think I can do?

LARRY
If he stays away from that Benzedrine, he might have a fair chance to straighten himself out. I'm just wondering if there isn't some way in which you might be able to persuade him ... no, that's too strong a word ... to influence him so that he lays off that stuff that might kill him. Also ... and I wouldn't ask you to be a spy if Nathan weren't in such a perilous condition ... also, you could simply keep tabs on him and report back to me by phone from time to time, letting me know how he's getting on. Does any of this seem unreasonable?

STINGO
No, of course not. I'd be glad to help. Help Nathan. And Sophie. They're very close to me.

Stingo rises to go and shakes Larry's hand.

STINGO (contd)
(with despairing optimism)
I think things might get better.

LARRY
(forelorn despite his twisted effort at a smile)
I certainly hope so.

EXT. SHOTS: FOREST HILLS

Stingo walking. It is twilight and people are returning home from work. SHOTS of Stingo walking to subway, waiting for subway trains, and changing trains on his journey back to Brooklyn. Stingo is lost in mobs of people. Now, like Sophie, he is buffeted by forces over which he has no control.

EXT: BROOKLYN STREET - NIGHT

Stingo walking reluctantly to the Pink Palace.

INT: YETTA'S BOARDING HOUSE - HALLWAY

Stingo once again climbing the stairs to Sophie's room. He knocks on the door of her room. There is no answer. He tries the knob, and opens the door.

STINGO
Sophie?

INT: SOPHIE'S ROOM - STINGO'S POV

The room is dark. There is no sign of life. He is about to leave, when there is a sound of a match being struck from behind the screen and a faint glow of light is reflected on the ceiling. It grows brighter as other candles are lit. A man appears from behind the screen and comes toward Stingo. He has a Rhett Butler moustache and is dressed in the clothes of a Southern gentleman of the Civil War or pre-Civil War period. In his hand he holds an old fashioned candelabra which gives the only light in the room.

NINETEENTH CENTURY SOUTHERN GENTLEMAN
(classic accent of a Southern gentleman of the period)
Mr. Stingo, we were beginning to get concerned. We were afraid somthin' terrible might have befallen you on your way to the plantation. I declare Miss Sophie was all for havin' me institute a search. I was about to tell Cato, our beloved Cato, to have the black stallion saddled and to provide me with torches so I could search the country-side.

As he approaches Stingo, WE SEE the man is Nathan. But the act and costume and moustache should be so good, that at first we should not be sure. He extends an elegantly ruffled arm to Stingo in welcome.

NATHAN (contd)
Miss Sophie should be down momentarily. She is beautifyin' herself for you. You know her feelin's for you. Your visits are so special! Forgive me. Ah'm bein' such a terrible host to you. After your long ride I have not even proffered a proper libation.

He crosses to a table in the rear and picks up a tray with drinks. He passes the record player, and almost as if he is doing sleight of hand flicks on the switch. He crosses back to Stingo with the tray of drinks and offers one to Stingo.

From the record player comes the sound of distant Negro voices singing old plantation songs. Stingo holds the drink in bewilderment.

NATHAN (contd)
Please, Sir, the julep is meant to be put to the lips and tasted.

Stingo automatically puts the glass to his lips, and sips.

STINGO
(dumbfounded)
It's a perfectly wonderful mint julep.
But where ... ?

There is the sound of a girlish giggle from behind the screen.

Nathan goes in back of the screen.

NATHAN (VO)
You need not have feared, Miss Sophie.
You of course look ravishing.

Nathan escorts Sophie from behind the screen. She is dressed in a Scarlett O'Hara ball gown with low decollete. Indeed she does look absolutely ravishing. Her hair has been pulled away from her face with curls in back, in classic Southern belle ball style. She could be Vivien Leigh as Scarlett O'Hara or Bette Davis as Jezebel going to the ball. She stands there radiant but shy, her eyes demurely looking down at the fan she holds.

SOPHIE
(to Stingo)
Mister Stingo, Ah have waited so long for this moment. Ah've heard such wonderful romantic tales of you and all youah adventures in Yankee Country.

NATHAN
Sophie, lamb, you did right well. Although I could hear a little Cracow around the old Atlanta.

SOPHIE
I'm sure no Southern belle sounded so ridiculous.

STINGO
Or looked so beautiful.

NATHAN
We've cooked an all-Southern dinner, buddy. Fried chicken, grits. Let me tell you you try to find grits in Flatbush!

STINGO
Where did you learn to do all that? Where did you get all this? When ...

NATHAN
Well, we figured only the best for our
(MORE)

NATHAN (contd)
Best Man. Now go behind the screen. I've got another outfit there for you. Ah am certainly not about to soive you another julep or any of mah Southern cookin' in them tacky, vulgar Yankee clothes.

Stingo goes behind the screen.

MEDIUM SHOT - STINGO CHANGING BEHIND THE SCREEN

NARRATOR (VO)
I put on my costume and rejoined the magic circle we had created, the three of us together, a magic circle to keep the demons of reality away.

EXT: PROSPECT PARK STABLES - NIGHT

A car drives up. Nathan, Sophie and Stingo get out, still in costume.

CAB DRIVER
(as Nathan pays him)
Are you guys makin' a movie?

NATHAN
We're just visiting here from the South.

CAB DRIVER
You mean that's the way you dress back home?

NATHAN
What's the matter? You think <u>you</u> dress better?

Cab Driver shrugs. He drives off.

Nathan, Sophie and Stingo laugh as they walk toward the stable.

NATHAN (contd)
Ah always enjoy a ride around mah property after dinner.

STINGO
And what a dinner! God, Nathan, is there anything you can't do?

Stingo's face clouds as he realizes the implications of what he has said.

SOPHIE
One day I must cook a Polish dinner.
(MORE)

SOPHIE (contd)
It is my turn. I tell you Nathan, we must have a dinner for all your scientist friends at Pfizer. After we are married, we will have an apartment and I will make a Polish dinner for them all. It will be fun, Stingo, for us to meet all those people from Nathan's other life.

Nathan says nothing. There is a strange, bewildered look on his face, as if realities he has heroically tried to push away are seeping through.

EXT: PROSPECT PARK - NIGHT

Nathan, Sophie and Stingo on horseback riding across a deserted stretch of meadows. Indeed, if we did not know where we were and who they were, we might think we were seeing people riding on a Plantation in the old South.

NARRATOR (VO)
Nathan rode as if he was born to ride. As he was born to do so many things.

Nathan spurs his horse and speeds ahead of Sophie and Stingo. The two of them watch him race across the empty park.

NARRATOR (VO contd)
I watched him drive his horse, as if he might through speed alone escape from the reality of his life and madness, to some world, some place where he'd be free to fulfill the gifts the gods had given him and then, in some cruel stroke of irony, had paralyzed with madness.

INT: HALLWAY - PINK PALACE - DAY

Stingo picking up his mail.

NARRATOR (VO)
I began avoiding Sophie. I was afraid she might see the truth about Nathan in my eyes and I was afraid of what that truth might do to her. I longed to get away. Thanks to my blessed father, the opportunity arose.

Stingo crosses to his room as he opens the letter from his father.

INT: STINGO'S ROOM
CLOSE SHOT - A LETTER HE IS READING FROM HIS FATHER

FATHER (VO)
Dear Stingo:
I am planning to pay you a two-day visit in that Sodom of the North. God help us all, my son.

INT: PENNSYLVANIA STATION

Stingo waiting as the Southern Limited pulls in. He scans the disembarking passengers, looking for his father. A tall courtly man in his fifties approaches him. He puts his arms around him in a great bear hug.

FATHER
(shouting over the great noise in the station)
I detest this place for its "barbarity", its lack of courtesy, its total bankruptcy in the estimable domain of public manners. But my God, how glorious it is to see you.

EXT: PENN STATION

His father and Stingo hailing a cab. Battling with other people on a rainy day.

FATHER
The snarling commands of the traffic cop, the blaring insult of horns, all the needlessly raised voices of the night denizens of this place ravage my nerves, acidify my doudenum, unhelm my composure and my will.

INT: TAXI-CAB

FATHER
(looks straight at Stingo with a no-nonsense diagnostic stare)
What's wrong, son?

STINGO
(realizing there is no way he can explain what has been happening to him)
Nothing ... really.

FATHER
You're not having too much money trouble, are you? You know, I think I have a way of solving that ...

The cab draws up to its destination, the Hotel McAlpin. The father pays the tab and then carefully hands the driver -- one Thomas McGuire -- a nickel tip.

DRIVER
(staring at the nickel)
Fucking asshole.

Part way out of the cab, Stingo's father pokes his nose back into the front window.

STINGO'S FATHER
(incredulous)
What did I hear you say?

POV - INTO CAB of the Driver. McGuire is a blur of thick neck and reddish hair in the shadows. There is a moment of silence.

DRIVER
I said you must be some fucking asshole.

STINGO'S FATHER
(his voice becoming a restrained cry)
And I think you must be part of the bottomless dregs of this loathsome city that spawned you and all your foul-mouthed breed! Detestable scum that you are, you are no more civilized than a sewer rat! In any decent place in the United States a person like you disgorging your disgusting filth would be taken out in a public square and horsewhipped!

As his voice rises, pedestrians halt beneath the McAlpin's blazing marquee.

STINGO'S FATHER (contd)
But this is neither a decent or a civilized place, and you are free to spew your putrid language upon fellow citizens ...

He is cut off in mid-torrent by McGuire's hasty escape as he rams the cab forward, barrelling up the avenue. Clutching at air, Stingo's father wheels about toward the sidewalk, and sheer whirling momentum propels him like a blind man into the upright hard steel shaft of a no-parking stanchion; the sound of his head making contact, as in an animated cartoon, produces a vibrating boinnng!

INT: McALPIN BAR

Stingo with his father. His father, bandaged, with a classic shiner, is sipping a straight bourbon.

STINGO'S FATHER
Son, ten days ago my dear friend and political and philosophical antagonist, Frank Hobbs, dropped dead. For many years, Frank had been the owner and absentee landlord of a small peanut farm over in Southerampton County. It is this farm that Frank left to me. What I'm proposing is that you come down to the farm and live on it, acting as the proprietor in my absence.

He pulls several Kodachrome snapshots of the farm out of an envelope in his jacket pocket and hands them to Stingo.

STINGO'S FATHER (contd)
The two negroes, who have been on the place for years with their families, have the practical matters of the place well in hand so that you would function as a kind of gentleman farmer whose main work I'm certain, would be the writing of that novel you tell me you have embarked upon.

CLOSE UP - SNAPSHOTS OF THE FARM - STINGO'S POV

Surrounded and shaded by lofty beech trees, the sprawling old mid-nineteenth century farmhouse looks as if it needs aside from a coat of paint, hardly anything to make it the comfortable abode of one who might slide easily into that great Southern tradition of writer-farmers.

STINGO'S FATHER
But you would also pay no rent and I'm sure I could manage a small extra stipend for your few responsibilities.

CLOSE SHOT - STINGO

Looking at pictures ... skewered squarely for an instant on a knifeblade of nostalgia for the rural South. The temptation is both poignant and powerful for him. Stingo's father beckons for the waiter.

STINGO'S FATHER
Waiter, two more Bourbons for me and my son.

INT: HOTEL ROOM - STINGO AND HIS FATHER SLEEPING SIDE BY SIDE IN TWIN BEDS

Stingo seems to be in the middle of a bad dream. His father's hand reaches out to touch him.

STINGO'S FATHER
(a troubled voice)
You all right, son?

Stingo looks at him bewildered.

STINGO'S FATHER (contd)
You hollered 'soapy'. Crazy nightmare. You must have been caught in a bath.

STINGO
(lying)
I don't know what I was doing.

There is silence. The electric fan drones on, penetrated intermittently by the city's restless night sounds.

STINGO'S FATHER
Something's bothering you. Is it a girl ... a woman, that is?

There is silence again.

STINGO
Yes. A woman.

STINGO'S FATHER
Do you want to tell me about it? I've had my troubles in that sphere.

Silence again.

STINGO
I'm sorry. I just can't talk.

SHOTS of Stingo showing his father New York. The Statue of Liberty, the Top of the Empire State Building, Radio City Music Hall, the Museum of Modern Art. Stingo is distracted but he is trying to have a good time for his father.

INT: PENNSYLVANIA STATION

Stingo putting his father on the train.

STINGO
(as his father gives him a farewell hug)
Poppa, I'm gonna leave here and go to the farm.

INT: YETTA ZIMMERMAN'S OFFICE
MEDIUM SHOT - YETTA OVER STINGO'S SHOULDER

YETTA
Well, I really am sorry you're leaving.
(MORE)

YETTA (contd)
Now if you should only turn out to be a great novelist, just think! People will think my house, Yetta's place, is blessed by magic. Isn't it thrilling about Nathan?

STINGO
Nathan?

YETTA
You don't know? Maybe it's still supposed to be a secret. He confided in me that he and his team have discovered a cure for Polio. In my house! A cure for polio! If only my Saul could have lived to see the day. I wish you should only be as successful an artist as Nathan -- that crazy Nathan -- has turned out to be as a scientist.

STINGO
(now disturbed)
Thank you, Mrs. Zimmerman.

He exits.

INT: HALLWAY - MRS. ZIMMERMAN'S

Morris Fink comes up to Stingo.

MORRIS FINK
What did Nathan say when he saw you?

STINGO
I haven't seen him for two days.

MORRIS FINK
He and Sophie left here a couple of hours ago. He said something about going to the hotel where you were staying with your father and getting everything straightened out with you once and for all.

STINGO
What?

MORRIS FINK
You must have missed them. She kept telling him he was imagining things. Trying to soothe him the way she does when he gets like that. God knows what mishugenah idea he has in mind this time! I told you to stay away from him!

(MORE)

MORRIS FINK (contd)
(exiting)
Next time you'll listen to Morris Fink!

Stingo goes into his room where his things are half packed. He seems shaken. He starts to pack his books, abruptly stops and puts his head in his hands. There is the sound of the phone ringing. He goes to the phone.

STINGO
Hello?

NATHAN
So you're back there, Mr. Stingo. Lordy, you've had Miss Sophie and me on a wild goose chase. I am disappointed of course. I had been so looking forward to meeting the wonderful Southern gentleman, your daddy, to tell him what a philandering shit his only son, the pure little artist, turned out to be. What would the wonderful Southern Gentleman say if he knew that his beloved cornpone son was fucking his best friend's Pollack fiancee?

STINGO
You're my best friend, Nathan. The best friend I've ever had. Where are you? Look, Nathan, I've just been planning this terrific little side trip ...

NATHAN
What kind of little side trip are y'all plannin' for old Buddy Nathan? A trip for ol' Buddy Nathan to see Mr. Jeff Davis's White House or the ol' plantation where Scarlett O'Hara whipped all those niggers with her ridin' crop ... while ol' Stingo's back at the Green Magnolia Motel with his best friend's wife? And guess what they're doin' together. Why, Stingo and her are in bed and he has actually mounted that tender willing little Polish piece an' they jus' fuckin' their fool heads off! Hee hee!

STINGO
Where's Sophie, Nathan? Is she there with you? Please, Nathan, please my friend, let me talk to Sophie.

NATHAN
So you want to talk to little ol' Sophie? Just what do you think bad ol' Nathan
(MORE)

NATHAN (contd)
plans to do with the poor little Polish Orphan of the Holocaust?

OPERATOR
That will be another ten cents, please.

NATHAN
Fuck your ten cents, operator. This is an important call and I'm not stopping to run around getting change.

There is a click and Nathan is cut off.

STINGO
(terrified)
Oh, Jesus!

He rushes back to his room, goes through all the papers on his desk and pulls out a scrap of paper with Larry's phone number on it, and rushes back to the phone and dials.

STINGO (contd)
Could I please speak to the Doctor. Please. It's urgent.

SECRETARY (VO)
I'm sorry. He left for Toronto this morning. He's on the train now and will be unreachable for several hours. Can you please leave a message?

STINGO
Tell him that ... Tell him that ... It'll be too late. By that time it will be too late.

SECRETARY (VO)
Could you please tell me the message you would like to leave.

STINGO
To call his brother's friend, Stingo. It's about his brother. It's urgent.

He hangs up in desperation. He picks up the phone again and dials the operator.

STINGO (contd)
Operator, could I have the number of the police?

The front door opens in back of Stingo and Sophie enters.

STINGO (contd)
Sophie, you're alright.

Stingo sees one of her arms is hanging strangely by her side.

STINGO (contd)
Your arm.

SOPHIE
I thought he'd broken it. But it's not. I got frightened ... and I slipped away. He had a gun. A pistol. He said he was going to use it.

STINGO
Oh, God.

SOPHIE
We have to find him. I should not have left him.

STINGO
Sophie, Nathan must be put away. He's dangerous. He has to be confined. Maybe forever.

The phone rings. Sophie picks it up.

SOPHIE
Nathan, I'm sorry I left you. Forgive me. But you know I love you. You have to know I love you.

From Stingo's POV WE SEE Sophie on the phone, and hear the crackle of Nathan's voice through the phone making its hideous accusations. In spite of herself, she begins to weep. Stingo grabs the phone from her.

STINGO
Nathan, we love you. We want to help. Please tell us where you are.
(trying desperately to pierce the wall of Nathan's madness)
We love you. We'd never do anything to hurt you.

NATHAN (VO)
God damn you to hell forever for betraying me behind my back, you whom I trust like the best friend I ever had! And that shit-eating grin of yours day after day, butter wouldn't melt in your mouth, would it, when you gave me a piece of your
(MORE)

NATHAN (VO contd)
manuscript to read ... ah gee, Nathan, thank you so much ...when not fifteen minutes earlier you'd been humping away in bed with the woman I was going to marry, I say was going to, past tense, because I'd burn in hell before I'd marry a two-timing Pollack who'd spread her legs for a sneaky Southern shitass betraying me like that.

STINGO
No, Nathan.

NATHAN
I'm coming to get you both.

There is a moment's silence, resonant, baffling. And then the sound of a metallic click through the phone.

STINGO
Nathan, please! Where are you?

NATHAN
Not far away, old pal. In fact, I'm right around the corner. And I'm coming to get you treacherous scum. And then you know what I'm going to do? Do you know what I'm going to do to you two deceitful, unspeakable pigs? Listen ...

There is an explosion of a gun shot in Stingo's ear. Stingo drops the receiver in panic and, turning, reaches for Sophie's hand.

NARRATOR (VO)
At that moment, I felt only unutterable fear. I looked at Sophie, and she looked at me, and we fled.

EXT: A TRAIN SPEEDING SOUTH ACROSS THE NEW JERSEY MARSHES - NIGHT

INT: TRAIN
TWO SHOT - SOPHIE AND STINGO SITTING TOGETHER

He is holding her hand. She is staring straight in front of her, dazed.

SOPHIE
I should have stayed with him.

STINGO
There's nothing you can do. I spoke to Larry. He'll be there as soon as he can.

SOPHIE
Maybe I could have helped him.

STINGO
He's never been this bad before. He might have killed you. He might have killed us both.

SOPHIE
He has been this bad before. Before we met you. But I didn't leave him then. He was crazy high that night. On coke. On benzedrine. It was the middle of the night when he came in. He had a car. He insisted I get up, get dressed and we drive off to see the New England autumn he loved so much. We were in Connecticut when we heard a special shortwave broadcast ... this reporter witnessing the hangings of the Nazi War Criminals. Nathan turned the car into a dirt road and stopped somewhere in the middle of a wood. He pulled me out of the car and shouted, "Why don't you admit it! You played footsie with the SS. That's how you got out of Auschwitz alive." He shoved me to my knees, tore open his pants and I sucked him as, one by one, the hangings were announced. Afterwards, we lay there in the wood. He had two pills of cyanide and for hours he flirted with our deaths. I suppose God was good because he went to sleep and I threw the pills away. And I knew Nathan and me would live for a while longer.

STINGO
You didn't think of leaving him?

SOPHIE
I did not fear death. I feared simply death taking him and him alone, leaving me behind.

She turns toward the window. She looks at the reflection of her face ... stationary, immovable, etched in front of the constantly changing countryside that speeds away from them. She buries herself in Stingo's shoulder. He puts his arms around her.

DISSOLVE TO:

It is now early morning. The first rays of sun are beginning

to come through the window. Sophie awakes abruptly. Stingo glances down at her. She seems a bit feverish; her brow and cheeks are flushed, and a fragile, dewy mustache of perspiration hovers above her lip.

SOPHIE
Stingo, would you go get me some water?

STINGO
Sure.

He presses down the aisle crowded with people, mostly servicemen, and near the vestibule finds the fountain, where he trickles warm unsavory looking water into a paper cup, and returns with it to Sophie. Sophie is clutching a full pint bottle of Four Roses which she has plucked from her suitcase.

STINGO (contd)
(gently)
Sophie. You haven't even had breakfast.

Sophie sloshes whiskey into her cup.

EXT: TRAIN - PULLING INTO PHILADELPHIA STATION

INT: TRAIN - SOPHIE AND STINGO

SOPHIE
Where are we?

STINGO
This is Philadelphia.

SOPHIE
(as the train comes to a stop)
I have to go to the lavatory.

She finishes off the cup before she leaves. Stingo watches anxiously as she begins to shove her way toward the rear of the car, the blond head bobbing, the pretty legs unsteady. Exhausted, he closes his eyes.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT: TRAIN - BALTIMORE STATION

CONDUCTOR
All aboard!

INT: TRAIN

Stingo who has been dozing, jumps straight up out of his seat. He looks out and sees that they are leaving a different station, not the Philadelphia one, but Baltimore. He looks at his watch

and realizes that an hour or more has passed. Sophie's seat beside him is still empty. He glances into the darkness outside, sees the passing sparkle of tunnel lights, and knows that they are leaving Baltimore. He struggles to the other end ofthe car, pressing and shoving past the bellies and rumps of fifty standees, actually knocking a small child down. In senseless dread, he pounds at the door of the woman's lavatory. A fat Negro woman with wild wiglike hair and bright marigold powder on her jowls sticks her face out.

BLACK WOMAN
Git outa here! You crazy?

Stingo plunges on.

INT: THE SWANKER REGIONS OF THE TRAIN

Enveloped by moist Muzak that follows Stingo as he frantically peers into roomette after roomette. He opens the doors of more lavatories, stalks the funereal plush reaches of the parlor cars, and hopefully scans the diner.

INT: CLUB CAR

Stingo bursts in. There is a little desk, a cash register ... its custodian a pleasant gray-haired middle-aged woman who gazes up from her work with mournful eyes.

STINGO
Excuse me, Ma'am. Have you seen a blond woman, medium height, a white blouse and black skirt, if she spoke to you, she had a Polish accent ...

CASHIER
Yes, poor dear, she was hunting for a telephone. Imagine, on a train! She wanted to call Brooklyn. Poor dear, she was crying. She seemed, well, a little drunk.
(pointing toward the other end of the car)
She went that way.

Stingo rushes to the other end of the car. It is a bleak cage of a vestibule, clangingly noisy, that is also the end of the train. A padlocked glass door crisscrossed by wire mesh looks down on the receding rails that glitter in the late-morning sun and converge at a point marking infinity amid the green pinewoods of Maryland. Sophie is sitting on the floor, slumped against the wall, her yellow hair adrift in the windy draft; in one hand she clutches the bottle. She gazes up and says something to Stingo, but he can not hear and he bends down closer.

SOPHIE
(barely a whisper)
I don't think I'm going to make it.

INT: LOBBY - HOTEL CONGRESS

Behind the registration desk stands a grandfatherly desk clerk. In front of the registration desk signing the register is Stingo, a very nervous young man, with a black leather Bible clutched in his other hand, accompanied by a violently rumpled, somewhat drunken Sophie.

CLOSE SHOT - REGISTRY

As Stingo registers. He puts the Bible on the counter ostentatiously. Under the name column he writes: Reverend and Mrs. Wilbur Entwistle. Under the address column he writes: Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Virginia.

DESK CLERK
(genially garrulous)
Have a nice stay, Reverend, you and the missus.

Stingo picks up the Bible.

DESK CLERK (contd)
Entwistle. You wouldn't be related to the Entwistles down around Powhaten County, would you, Reverend?

STINGO
(for the first time in a long time, smiling; to Sophie)
I'm back in the South.

INT: HOTEL BEDROOM - MORNING

A cubby hole of a room, drab and stifling. Sophie, wobbling and desperate for sleep, plunges onto the bed even before the bellboy has deposited their bags on a rickety stand and accepted Stingo's twenty-five cents. Stingo opens a window upon a ledge calcimine with pigeon droppings. Stingo lies down next to Sophie on the bed which has become unsprung in the middle, not so much allowing him as forcing him to roll toward her, as in the bosom of some shallow hammock. Sophie sleeps against him with lips apart. Her simple touch and proximity make him stir. The low-cut silk dress she wears has allowed most of one breast to become exposed. Stingo, instinctively, hungrily brushes his fingertips over it in a seizure of pure lust, and then abruptly, shamefacedly, withdraws his hand. He stares at her with love. And then, he puts his arm protectively around her sleeping form and closes his eyes.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT: ROOM - STINGO'S POV - AS HE WAKES UP - TWILIGHT

Sophie is sitting crouched on the bed looking down at him. There is the same wan haggardness in her face, and beneath her eyes there are dark patches, but she seems revived and reasonably sober.

SOPHIE
(in an exaggerated accent)
Well, Reverend En-weestle, deed you'ave a good sleep?

STINGO
(in a vague panic)
Christ, Sophie, I slept like a corpse.

SOPHIE
I feel so much better after that sleep.

STINGO
You went out like a light.

SOPHIE
So did you. When I woke up, there you were with your mouth open, snoring.

STINGO
You're kidding. I don't snore. I've never snored in my life! No one ever told me that before.

SOPHIE
(in a teasing voice)
It's because you haven't ever <u>slept</u> with anybody.
(now serious)
Stingo, where are we going?

STINGO
We're going to see the Washington sights. We'll go by the White House. We might even get a look at Harry Truman ...

SOPHIE
(no seriously)
No, Stingo, I mean where are we <u>really</u> going?

STINGO
We're going to that farm I told you about down in Southern Virginia. Once we get settled we can drive up to Richmond and invest in a good phonograph and lots of records.

SOPHIE
Stingo, how do you mean "get settled"?

STINGO
(after a long pause)
Sophie, I'm in love with you. I want to marry you. I want us to live down on that farm together. I want to write my books there, and I want you to be there with me and help me and raise a family.
(and then)
I need you very much. So very, very much. Is it too much to hope that you need me too?
(he is not unaware that he may have sounded like a suitor in an old Hollywood film, but there's nothing to be done for it)

Sophie puts her head down next to Stingo and she speaks into his ear with a muffled voice while he watches her silk-clad hips swaying lightly above him.

SOPHIE
(her lips brushing his neck)
Do you know something, Stingo, I'm beyond thirty. What would you do with an old lady like me?

STINGO
I'd manage.

SOPHIE
Some day I'll just be old and ugly and you'll still be quite young and I won't blame you if you go chasing after all the young and pretty mademoiselles.

STINGO
Oh, Sophie, Sophie. Don't talk like that. You'll always be my ... well, my ...
(groping for a phrase)
Number One.

She sits erect again.

SOPHIE
Why don't we just go to this place for a little while and I could stay with you without us being married, and we could decide.

STINGO
In a little country place like we'd be living in, it would be impossible not to
(MORE)

STINGO (contd)
be married. Jesus Christ, Sophie, it's full of Christians! So what if the wedding ceremony will have to come pretty soon. I've loved you for so long, darling. And I know you're fond of me and given time ... give us time, Sophie. Just give us time and we'll be fine.

She seems almost saddened by how much he loves her.

SOPHIE
It is not just the age difference between us, Stingo. You should have a different mother for your children.

STINGO
Only you.

SOPHIE
It would not be fair for your children to have me as a mother.

STINGO
(shakes his head)
They would be the luckiest children in the world.

SOPHIE
(for a moment she is silent)
Stingo, I must tell you something now that I've never told anyone before. Never before.

STINGO
Tell me, Sophie.

SOPHIE
You must get me a drink first.

Stingo goes to her suitcase and plucks out the second pint bottle of whiskey she had hidden there. Then he walks to the tiny bathroom and half fills a sickly-green plastic glass with water and brings it to the bed. Sophie pours whiskey into the glass until it is full.

SOPHIE (contd)
Do you want some?

He shakes his head. We hear the sound of a child playing a flute again.

INT: TRAIN WITH BOARDED WINDOW

There is a warm sunlight piercing the crack in the boarded

window, falling across the reflection of Sophie and her two children like a ray of hope in the jumbled darkness.

SOPHIE
On the day I arrived at Auschwitz, it was beautiful. The forsythia was in bloom.

The train slows down and there is a steaming hissing sound of brakes. Awash in dim light, prisoners of both sexes and all ages cling together for support agains the braking of the train. The train has finally reached its destination.

The generators cease working; the bulbs go out in the compartment and what remaining light there is filters through the cracks in the boarded window. The distant sound of band music makes its way into the compartment. In the near-darkness there comes a surge of anxious whispering ... hoarse, rising, but as incomprehensible as the rustle of an army of leaves, with the exception of one word: Auschwitz. Some convent girls begin to wail in unison, beseeching the Holy Mother who is with them.

A MAN'S VOICE
Shut up.

DISSOLVE TO:

Sophie standing now, looking down at her children sitting on some woman's lap. There is the sound of whispering again but just one voice at a time, first from far away and then closer and closer; the sound of a message being passed.

MAN NEXT TO SOPHIE
All the Jews up front are now in vans.

SOPHIE
In vans?

WOMAN
They will be assigned to jobs. A friend of mine wrote me conditions here are not bad at all.

MAN
(whispering)
They do not know. They are going to the gas.

The Holy Mother and the convent girls start to pray. Sophie, looking at her sleeping children, prays with them.

DISSOLVE TO:

Sophie now sitting with her children. The silence again is interrupted by the relay of whispering.

WOMAN NEXT TO HER
(beginning to cry)
The Home Army members in the car in front of us have been transported to Birkenau.

MAN NEXT TO HER
(whispers)
The crematoriums.

Eva is awakened by the woman next to her crying. Sophie soothes and rocks her back to sleep, humming a lullaby. She is now clutching her children more tightly to her.

JAN
Momma, you're hurting me.

She releases her hold a bit. She continues to hum; her voice is very fragile, her eyes are closed, but the voice is almost calm at last, as through her inexpressible terror she tastes faintly the blessed bitter relief of acceptance.

EXT: STATION PLATFORM THAT UP UNTIL NOW WE HAVE ONLY SEEN IN THE DISTANCE, FROM HOESS'S HOUSE

SOPHIE'S POV - People are lined up for the selection.

The Auschwitz Band is playing a foolish carefree Tango.

CLOSE SHOT - EVA AND SOPHIE

Sophie is holding the child up to look at the band. In this CLOSE SHOT it could almost be any mother and child watching a band in a parade. The child, clutching her flute, has that solemn look of fascination that children have when they watch a parade. Sophie hums with the music, trying to keep the child calm and occupied.

S.S. DOCTOR (VO)
I'd like to get you into bed with me.
(Iche mochte mit dir schlafen)

She turns around to face a young S.S. officer. It is the sensitive young doctor we saw at Hoess's house.

He stands over her in his slightly askew SS uniform on the dusty concrete platform at five in the afternoon, flushed with wine or brandy or schnapps and mouthing his unpatrician words in an indolently patrician voice.

DOCTOR (contd)
Du bist ein Polack? Bist du auch ein Kommunist?

Sophie puts Eva down and places one arm around her shoulders, the other around Jan's waist, saying nothing. The doctor belches.

DOCTOR (contd)
I know you're a Polack, but are you also another one of these filthy Communists?

And then in his fog he turns toward the next prisoners, seeming almost to forget Sophie.

SOPHIE
Ich bin polnisch! In Krakow geboren!
(blurting helplessly)
I'm not Jewish! Or my children ... they're not Jewish either ... They are racially pure ... I'm a Christian. I'm a devout Catholic.

The doctor turns again. His eyebrows arch and he looks at Sophie with inebriate, wet, fugitive eyes, unsmiling. She knows she has said something wrong, perhaps fatally wrong. She averts her face for an instant, glancing at adjoining line of prisoners shambling through the golgotha of their selection, seeing the Holy Mother who had been in her compartment at the precisely congealed instant of her doom ... dispatched to the left and to the crematoria by an almost imperceptible nod of a doctor's head.

SS DOCTOR
So you're not a Communist. You're a believer.

SOPHIE
Ja, mein Haputpmann. I believe in Christ.

The doctor is a little unsteady on his feet. He leans over for a moment to an enlisted underling with a clipboard and murmurs something, meanwhile absorbedly picking his nose. Eva, pressing heavily against Sophie's leg, begins to cry.

SS DOCTOR
(in a thick tongued but oddly abstract voice)
So you believe in Christ the Redeemer? ...
(pause)
Did he not say, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me?"

He turns back to her, moving with the twitching methodicalness of a drunk. Sophie, choked with fear, is about to attempt a reply.

SS DOCTOR (contd)
You may keep one of your children.

SOPHIE
Bitte?

SS DOCTOR
You may keep one of your children. The other one will have to go. Which one will you keep?

SOPHIE
You mean, I have to choose?

SS DOCTOR
You're a Polack, not a Yid. That gives you a privilege, a choice.

She feels her legs crumple.

SOPHIE
I can't choose! I can't choose!
(she begins to scream)
Ich kann nicht walen!

The doctor becomes aware of unwanted attention.

SS DOCTOR
Shut up! Hurry now and choose. Choose, goddamnit, or I'll send them both over there. Quick!

She kneels on the hurtful, abrasive concrete, drawing her children toward her so smotheringly tight that she feels that their flesh might be engrafted to hers even through layers of clothes. Her disbelief is total, deranged. She looks upward in supplication at the gaunt, waxy skinned young Rottenfuhrer, the doctor's aide. He appears stunned and he returns her gaze with a wide-eyed baffled expression, as if to say: I can't understand this either.

SOPHIE
(pleading in a whisper)
Don't make me choose. I can't choose.

SS DOCTOR
Send them both over there, then, nach links.

She thrusts the little girl, Eva, away from her and rises from the concrete with a clumsy stumbling motion.

EVA
(a thin but soaring cry)
Mama!

SOPHIE
Take the baby! Take my little girl!

The aide, with a careful gentleness, tugs at Eva's hand and leads her away into the waiting legion of the damned who are destined for the crematoria. The child continues to look back, beseeching, but, from Sophie's POV, the image is blurred, as she is now almost completely blinded by tears. There is now just the dim outline of a little figure clutching a teddy bear and a flute.

INT: HOTEL ROOM - WASHINGTON

Sophie and Stingo face each other silently on the bed.

SOPHIE
We will go to the farm tomorrow. But, please, Stingo, no more talk about marriage and children.

STINGO
I want my children with you.

SOPHIE
It is enough for now that we will go to the farm and live for a while.

EXT: SIGHTSEEING BUS - WASHINGTON - NIGHT

Driving by the monuments and government buildings.

NARRATOR (VO)
That night we wandered the streets of Washington and I willed myself to feel we were as much a couple as the contented, families of middle class Americans with whom we shared the bus.

INT: SIGHTSEEING BUS

Filled with ordinary American middle class families; people of all ages. Indeed, taken in the group, the Reverend and Mrs. Entwhistle, looked at from afar, might almost seem no different than the others.

INT: HOTEL LOBBY - WASHINGTON

Stingo and Sophie hand in hand, walking toward the elevator. She is already drowsing against his shoulder.

DESK CLERK
Goodnight, Reverend. Mrs. Entwhistle.

STINGO
(almost feeling secure in his role)
Goodnight, sir.

INT: ELEVATOR

Sophie clings with heavy weariness to Stingo's waist.

INT: HOTEL ROOM

Onto the sway-back bed she flings herself wordlessly, without removing her clothes, and is instantaneously asleep. He puts a blanket over her, and after stripping to his skivvy drawers, lies down beside her and falls asleep himself, like one bludgeoned.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT: HOTEL ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT
CLOSE SHOT - STINGO - WAKING UP

STINGO'S POV - Sophie is naked, she is tenderly licking the recesses of his ear, and she is groping for his cock. She tugs at his underpants.

SOPHIE
(in a whisper)
Oh, now, Stingo darling.

He begins to kiss Sophie like a man dying of thirst and she returns his kisses, groaning. She rises up and moves *down to his waist.*

MEDIUM SHOT - SOPHIE - STINGO'S POV

Sophie looks directly up at him; there is an expression of supplication, yearning, that seems both erotic and religious. It is the **OPENING IMAGE** of the film. Only now it is sharp and clear, not yet obscured or dimmed by memory.

NARRATOR (VO)
I was twenty-two, and a virgin, and was clasping in my arms at last the goddess of my unending fantasies. My lust was inexhaustible. Sophie's lust was both a plunge into carnal oblivion and a flight from memory and grief. More than that, I now see, it was a frantic and orgiastic attempt to beat back death.

As the Narrator talks, the IMAGE of Sophie bleaches into white.

INT: HOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Stingo wakes up with his face afloat in a puddle of sunlight, and he reaches with an instinctive twitch for Sophie's arm, hair, breast, something. But Sophie is gone. He looks in the

mirror and sees from the slant of the mirror that Sophie is not in the bathroom and therefore not in the room at all. He leaps from the bed and the headache of a hangover smites his skull like a mallet. As he struggles into his trousers the bell tolls outside and he counts the strokes. It is noon! Half clothed, murmuring to himself curses, recriminations, he bursts out of the room.

INT: HOTEL - FIRE STAIRS

Stingo galloping down the fire stairs.

INT: HOTEL LOBBY

As Stingo bursts in. A single Black bellboy is pushing a mop. The old codger who had first greeted him drowses behind the desk. At the sight of Stingo he comes alert.

STINGO
Have you seen ... Mrs. Entwhistle?

DESK CLERK
She came down real early, Reverend, so early she had to wake me up.

BELLBOY
Hit must have been aroun' six.

DESK CLERK
She looked like she was in a real state, Reverend.
(pause apologetically)
I mean, well, I think she'd had several beers. Anyway, she got on the phone here, long-distance to Brooklyn, New York. I couldn't help overhearing. She was talkin' to someone ... a man, I guess. She began to cry a lot and told him she was leaving here right away. Kept calling to him ... she was real upset, Reverend. Mason. Jason. Something like that.

STINGO
(a catch in his voice)
Nathan.

Sympathy and concern well up in the old clerk's eyes.

DESK CLERK
She went on upstairs and then she came down with her bag and Jackson here took her over to Union Station.

STINGO
Oh, Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ.

There is a questioning look on the face of the old man, who as a member of the Second Baptist Church of Washington is doubtless unprepared for such impiety from a preacher.

INT: HOTEL ROOM

Stingo enters, shattered. He goes into the bathroom and tucked against the mirror above the lavatory is a note, scrawled in pencil. He picks it up and reads it.

INSERT - NOTE

SOPHIE (VO)
My dearest Stingo, your such a beautiful lover I hate to leave and forgive me for not saying goodbye but I must go back to Nathan. Believe me you will find some wonderful Mademoiselle to make you happy on the Farm. But when I woke I was feeling so terrible and in Despair about Nathan bei that I mean so filled with guilt and thoughts of death it was like eis flowing in my blut. So I must be with Nathan again for whatever that mean. I may not see you again but do believe me how much knowing you have meaned to me. You're a great lover Stingo. I feel so bad, I must go now. Forgive my poor englisch, I love Nathan but now feel this Hate of Life and God. FUCK God and all his hande werk. And Life too. And even what remain of love. Sophie.

EXT: TRAIN PLATFORM - UNION STATION - WASHINGTON

Stingo boarding a train.

NARRATOR (VO)
I got back to Union Station in time to catch the three o'clock train to New York.

INT: TRAIN

Stingo taking a seat.

NARRATOR (VO)
It was only after I had seated myself in the stuffy coach that I realized I must call Morris Fink or Larry before it was all over. But even as I thought this,
(MORE)

NARRATOR (VO contd)
the train began to shudder forward, and I knew there could be no more communication.

Stingo takes out The Holy Bible which he carries in a bundle along with TIME Magazine and the Washington Post. A fudge-colored lady of majestic heft and girth squeezes in the seat beside him. He turns to glance at her, aware of her gaze on him. She scrutinizes him with round, moist, friendly eyes the size of sycamore balls. She smiles, gives a wheeze, and her expression embraces him with all the motherly concern his heart at that hopeless moment longs for.

LADY
(with incredible good cheer)
Sonny, dey is only one Good Book. And you got it right in you' hand.

She pulls out of a shopping bag her own Bible and settles back to read with an aspirated sigh of pleasure and a wet smacking of lips.

LADY (contd)
Believe in His work, and ye shall be redeemed ... dat's de holy Gospel an' de Lawd's truth. Amen.

STINGO
Amen.

LADY
Why you cryin', sonny? Somebody done hurt you bad?

Stingo can not reply.

LADY (contd)
Why don't the two of us jes read together from the Good Book. Nothin' like readin' aloud from the Good Book to make a soul feel better. Now where'd you like to start?

Stingo opens his Bible in the middle of its pages, and the Psalms of David.

STINGO
Psalm Eighty-eight.

LADY
Dat is some fine psalm.

The two of them now read aloud in unison.

STINGO AND LADY
O Lord God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before thee: incline thine ear unto my cry; For my soul is full of troubles ...

DISSOLVE TO:

SERIES OF SHOTS of train speeding north to New York, going through the gentle country side, the ugly industrial outskirts of cities, the marshes of New Jersey. And always over it, the sound of Stingo and the Lady reading aloud various portions of The Bible.

EXT: PINK PALACE - BROOKLYN - NIGHT

As Stingo walks toward it.

The Pink Palace looks like the set of one of those glossy, brutal detective movies we have seen a hundred times. All the avatars of death are there: ambulances, fire engines, emergency vans, police cars with pulsing red lights ... A floodlight envelops all in its acetylene glare. There is one of those grim barricades with its cardboard sign ... Do Not Cross ... and everywhere stand clots of policemen. Stingo is about to argue with one of these cops, asserting his right to enter, when Larry spies him and speaks brusquely to the cop, and he allows Stingo to go inside. Stingo hesitates.

As he looks up at the house from below, the naturalistic sounds of the scene begin to fade, until the scene is without any sound. Over the dumb show that follows, the sound of the child's flute once more begins the simple melody that has never been completed in the film.

Stingo ascends the stairs up to the porch, opens the door and enters the house.

INT: FRONT HALLWAY - YETTA'S

It has become a silent film ... Only the flute, pulling Stingo toward the final denoument, as it has pulled Sophie before.

In his room, with its door ajar, Stingo sees Yetta Zimmerman half lying, half sitting sprawled in a chair, muttering distractedly in Yiddish. Her wide homely face, usually such an image of fine humor, is bloodless, has the vacant stare of shock. An ambulance attendant hovers near her, ready to administer a syringe.

Saying nothing, Larry leads Stingo upstairs past a cluster of wormy looking police reporters and two or three photographers

who seem to respond to any moving object by exploding flash-bulbs. Cigarette smoke hangs thickly over the landing.

There is still no sound; all is dumb show, with the only accompaniment the little flute.

Near the entrance to Sophie's room, Morris Fink, even more drained of color than Yetta, is looking genuinely bereft. And finally there is the room, glowing in coralline softness beyond the battered-down door.

INT: SOPHIE'S ROOM - THROUGH THE DOOR

Stingo blinks in the dim light, then gradually catches sight of Sophie and Nathan where they lie on top of the bright apricot bedspread. They are clad as on that long ago Sunday when he first saw them together ... she in her sporty togs from a bygone time, he in those wide-striped raffish, anachronistic gray flannels that had made him look like a successful gambler. Dressed thus, but recumbent and entwined in each other's arms, they appear from where he stands as peaceful as two lovers who have gaily costumed themselves for an afternoon stroll, but on impulse decided to lie down and nap, or kiss and make love, or merely whisper to each other of fond matters, and are frozen in this grave and tender embrace forever.

Over this final IMAGE of the lovers buried in each other's arms, the flute reaches the last part of the simple child melody. And now, for the first time, it completes the melody. The Piper's Song is ended.

CLOSE SHOT - STINGO

The CAMERA is LOOKING UP at him. He seems bigger, older, more a man.

He stands there a moment and then turns away. He sees the book of Emily Dickenson poems Sophie gave Nathan on a table. He walks over to the table, picks it up and goes over to the bed. He opens the book.

STINGO
(over the bodies of the lovers)
"Ample make this bed,
Make this bed with awe;
In it wait till judgment break
Excellent and fair."

He hesitates before he continues.

STINGO (contd)
Be its mattress straight,
Be its pillow round;
Let no sunrise yellow noise
Interrupt this ground."

He goes back over to the table, puts the book down and walks out of the room.

EXT: THE PINK PALACE - NIGHT

Stingo walks out of the house for the last time. He does not look back.

EXT: BROOKLYN BRIDGE - NIGHT

Stingo walking toward Manhattan.

NARRATOR (VO)
And so ended my voyage of discovery in a place as strange as Brooklyn.

EXT: BROOKLYN BRIDGE - NIGHT

Stingo reaches the center of the bridge.

NARRATOR (VO)
I reached the center of the bridge where Nathan had welcomed me into the Pantheon of the Gods.

Stingo walks over to the railing where he and Sophie and Nathan had stood and looks out over the river where they had thrown their glasses.

NARRATOR (VO contd)
It was then that the tears finally spilled forth, tears which I had tried manfully to resist and could resist no longer. And so I let go the rage and sorrow for Sophie and Nathan and for the many others who during these past months had battered at my mind and now demanded my mourning: Sophie and Nathan, yes, but also Jan and Eva and all those others Sophie had brought into my life who were but a few of the beaten and butchered and betrayed and martyred children of the earth. My sobs made an unashamed racket in the night. And I was blinded not just by my tears but by so many images of death and dying.

Stingo clutches to the railing for support.

NARRATOR (VO contd)
When I could finally see again, I saw the first rays of daylight relfected in the murky river. I looked straight up at
(MORE)

NARRATOR (VO contd)
the blue-green sky with its translucent shawl of mist: like a tiny orb of crystal, solitary and serene. This was not judgment *day ... only morning. Morning:* excellent and fair.

Stingo continues his walk away from Brooklyn.

The SCREEN goes to WHITE.

As OUR EYES adjust to the empty harsh light on the SCREEN, the bright nothingness with which the picture opened, WE SEE etched as in the beginning, Sophie's image. She looks directly up at the audience. There is an expression of supplication, yearning, that might be erotic or religious. The IMAGE HOVERS half there, half not there, never fully developed. As if it is etched upon the SCREEN forever.